

because a member had left money in his will for the congregation and had stipulated that the rabbi must worship with covered head. That ruling is kept up to this day. Grossman was a very fluent and interesting preacher. At least so it seemed to us students at the time. Charles Karma of Denver for the last 40 years used to write out on Saturday night the summary of the sermons he heard Grossman deliver Friday nights. He could have wanted no better course in homiletics.

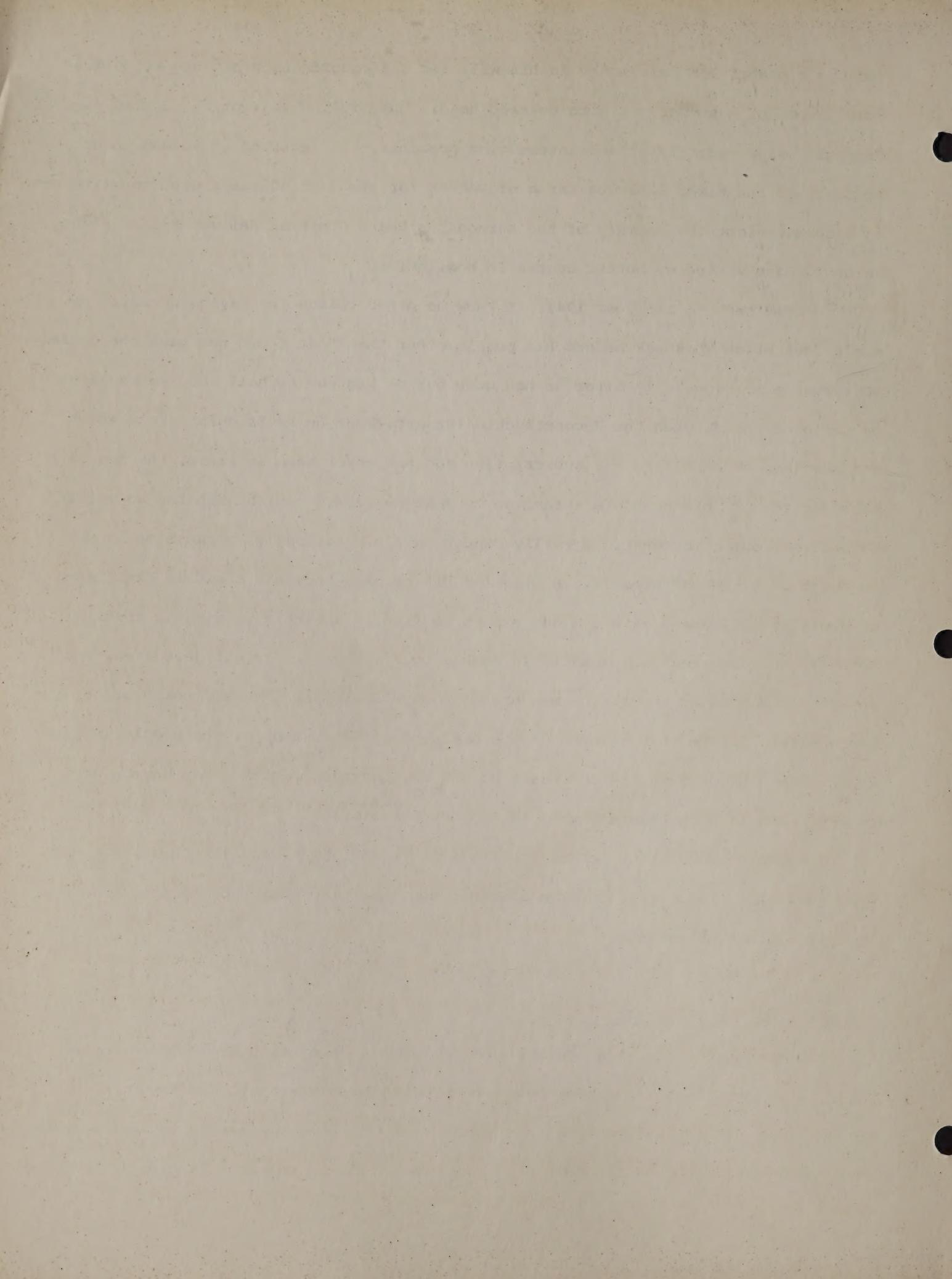
To come back to the year 1941. I know no other reason for having accepted Newman's invitation to speak before his people other than that I did not have the courage to refuse him, especially after he had gone out of his way to hail the New Haggadah. On the other hand, when the Reconstructionist attacked the Revisionist group which was heading, he cancelled his subscription and has never seen it since. He has never seen fit to call his people's attention to what he termed tonight as the "so called" Reconstructionist movement. I really cannot take him seriously, because he is not too much of a "hohum" himself. And as for his people, they are about as crude and as Jewishly illiterate as one might expect to find in a little provincial town. Actually one does meet occasionally in such a town with a few intelligent Jews, but apparently not among the active members of Rodeph Sholom in the very heart of this metropolis. I form this opinion on the basis of my impression of the people as they appeared and reacted and on the basis of the few questions which I had Newman draw out from some of them before I went to address them.

I spoke to them about Jerome Frank's article and about Reconstructionism. But I am sure that what I said to them made not the least impression on their habits of thought or thoughtlessness.

* * * *

Monday, December 15, 1941

The Seminary students whose attitude in class is generally challenging to the point of being ill mannered are those who regard themselves as the defenders of the faith. They generally come from the Yeshivah or from some similar Talmudical academy where they have absorbed considerable knowledge of Talmud text but little of anything



else. There is so much about them that is reminiscent of Jesuitry that I never feel comfortable when they try to engage me in debate. It is never a discussion for the sake of learning, but to put me in the wrong. There are two men particularly who get on my nerves. They are Hertzberg and Sam Cohen. They possess a considerable degree of general knowledge and mental ability, but unfortunately because of their cock-sureness and impudence they will utilize their knowledge and ability more in the interests of power for themselves than of good for our poor leaderless people.

This morning I had occasion to explain the midrash in Mekilta on (p. 228)

which is interpreted as meaning

I pointed out that it implied an idea which figures prominently in Christology, namely that redemption requires a blood sacrifice. I then went on to remark that there are many such parallels between Jewish and Christian religion. As one such parallel I mentioned the principle of vicarious stonement, according to which the premature death of a righteous man may be due to sin of his contemporaries, for which it is an expiation. Hertzberg maintained that no such teaching can be found in Jewish religion. In all such situations I find myself helpless because I cannot quote chapter and verse. I merely said that the next time we meet I will indicate a number of passages substantiating my contention.

When I came home I found a whole section in Moore's Judaism devoted to the idea of vicarious atonement. There is some mention of it in the Jewish Encyclopedia. In the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics which has an article on Atonement by that darned fool ?

there is not the slightest allusion to that doctrine. This is what I was afraid of. Our Jewish theologians are too stupid or too dishonest to admit that such a doctrine was advanced by the ancient Sages. I would therefore not be able to convince a stubborn mule like Hertzberg if I didn't have Moore's text to substantiate what I said.

While I was listening to the comments on the sermon delivered by Wind, in came Rabbi Charry with the president of his congregation in Indianapolis, Mr. Frish. Frisch listened attentively to the discussion and to my rebuilding of the sermon.

He seemed rather unusually informed about Jewish matters, for a layman. After class I had him and Charry come to my office. I tried out on him the idea of a Jewish Religious Fellowship. He made an interesting observation. He said that the editors of the Reconstructionist themselves do not live up to the principles of Reconstructionism. He alluded to what he termed a brilliant rabbi on the Board (I think he means Steinberg) who was at one time rabbi in Indianapolis) who does not translate Reconstructionism into the educational curriculum of his congregation. How then can the movement be effective?

* * * *

Tuesday, December 16, 1941

One of the outcomes of the Rapp-Content Committee appointed by the N.Y. State Legislature to investigate subversive activities is the organization of courses conducted by a number of teachers who have been expelled from the public school system and their sympathizers. Those courses go under the name of "The School for Democracy." The description of that school as given in the first circular announcing it for this fall reads as follows: "A progressive educational center designed to meet the needs of adults for a courageous and forthright examination of society. A forum for discussion and analysis of current events. An institution of learning staffed by those who have proven themselves champions of the rights of the people. -- The School for Democracy is established at a time when world crisis demands of all people understanding and action. It is designed to provide intellectual leadership, to mark out a route through the maze of current forces and events. Its teachers have been tempered in the struggle to maintain and extend academic freedom. They have a passion for the truth. They have learned democracy in the struggle to maintain it. The School for Democracy takes its place as a progressive center of culture and learning. It is built to the pattern of the future."

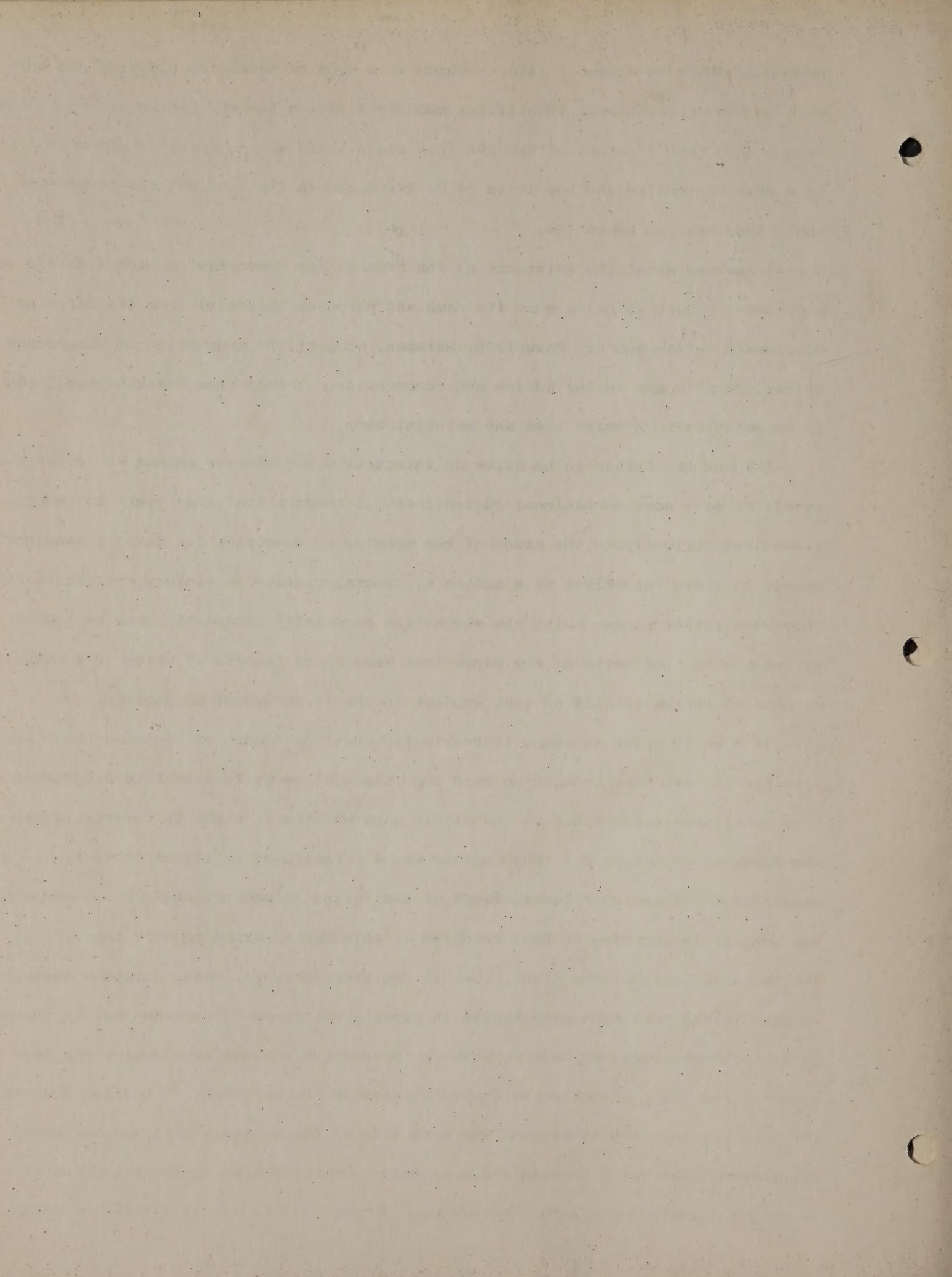
The reason I have thought it worthwhile to quote the foregoing is that it represents the kind of school that I have been yearning for, and to which I would have given the best that is in me. The fact that no such school exists through the length and breadth of the land is evidence of the meaninglessness of democracy.

Democracy which is a way of life -- which is a type of economics politics and culture -- has not even been identified, much less ever achieved. There can be no more urgent need than a school of thought that would impel men to identify democracy, to know what it implies and how it is to be furthered in the institutions of government, industry and education.

I learned about the existence of the "School for Democracy" (which I do not for one moment regard as being what its name and purposes indicate) from its director Dr. Howard Selsam and Mr. Maxwell N. Weisman, who, at the suggestion of Mrs. Guggenheim, came to ask me for advice and cooperation. I told them frankly that I was in no position to promise them any material help.

I found Dr. Selsam to be quite an interesting and sincere person and so allowed myself to make some educational suggestions. I thought that they ought to devote themselves seriously to the study of the meaning of democracy for our day, and not merely to limit themselves to a series of general courses on history, politics, etc. They were rather pleased with the suggestion especially because it came on top of my reading to them parts of the paper "The Meaning of Democracy" which is a translation of my Hebrew article on that subject in the first number of Bizzaron.

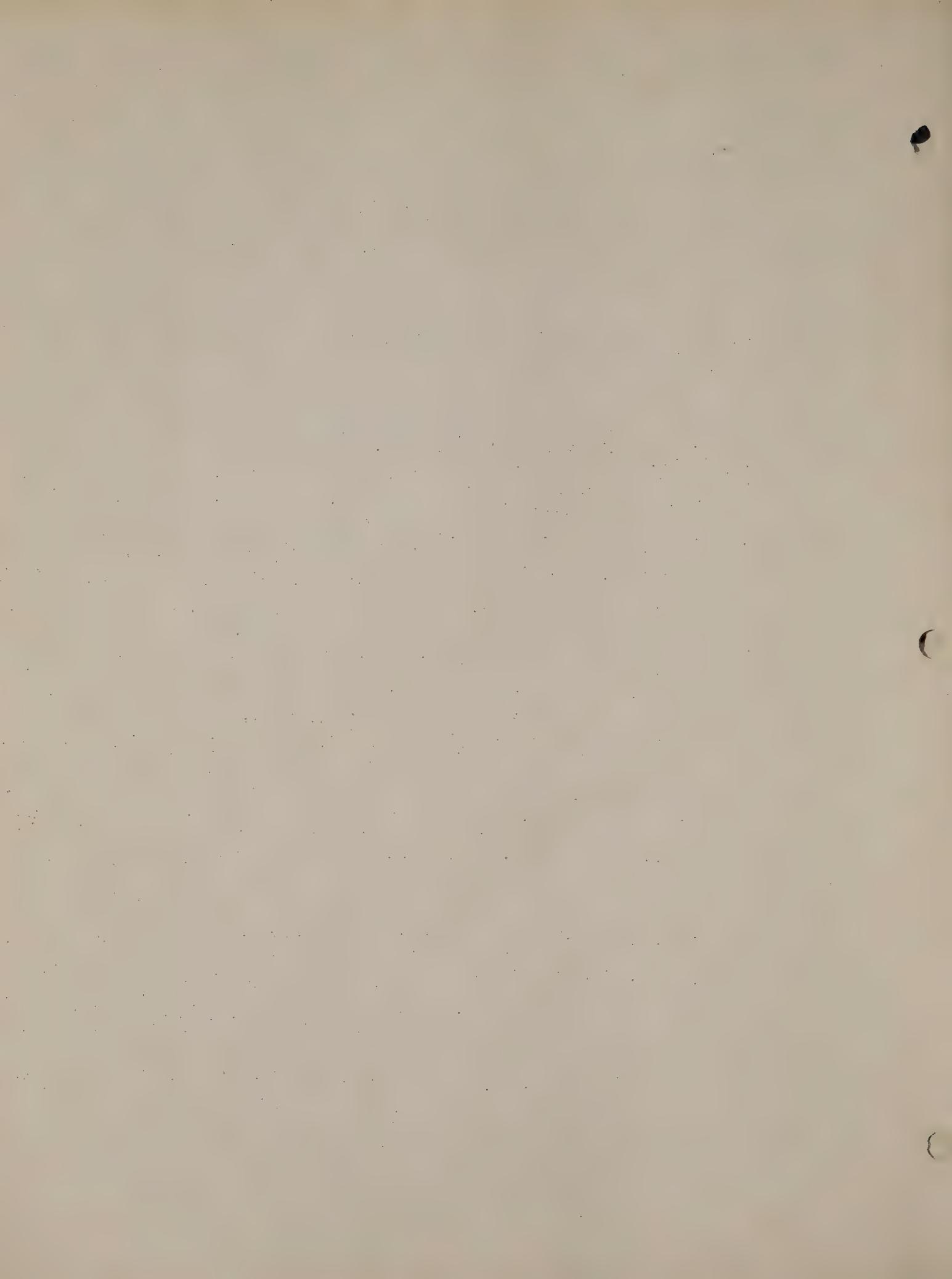
In a world which is coming increasingly under the domain of violence those who like myself have been brought up amid conditions of security find life at present one continuous nightmare. In the Middle Ages walking at night in deserted streets was known to be dangerous. Such danger was a normal part of life at that time. But modern civilization with its network of facilities to protect the citizen who goes his own way is supposed to have rendered it safe for a person to walk the streets in the early hours of the night. Yet in New York in recent weeks numerous assaults on pedestrians have been perpetrated in parks and streets by no means out of the way. It is no longer regarded safe to walk in the park by oneself even during the day. I was in the habit of taking my constitutional in Central Park. I no longer do so. But this evening even walking on the park side of the avenue was robbed for me of its recreational value because a few loafers were running about loose and one of them assumed a threatening attitude toward me. It may well be the little fellow meant



nothing, but the numerous killings and woundings of pedestrians lately has robbed me of peace of mind and I get jittery at the least annoyance.

I have begun reading Henry Torres' "Pierre Laval." In my own little world I find in my "friend" Boxer many traits very much like those displayed by Laval. Boxer has written a virulent article attacking the proposed "Guide to Jewish Ritual Usage" which appeared as a series of four articles in the recent issues of the Reconstructionist. I cannot permit its publication without a reply in the same issue. It is full of sophistries and misrepresentations. His purpose in writing the article is quite apparent. He has been fawning on Finkelstein and the latter has been cultivating him the last two years, despite the fact that they hated and lied to each other over a considerable period before I left for Palestine. I understand that Finkelstein refused to let Boxer see any of his material on Akiba because Boxer was working on R. Eliezer. I myself heard Boxer say that he could not afford to write an honest review of Finkelstein's "The Pharisees" because he would have to expose a number of deliberate misquotations and misstatements of fact. Just before my leaving for Palestine Finkelstein played a dirty trick on Boxer which compromised him with Cyrus Adler.

But now Boxer is an aspirant for the chair in Jewish Systematic Theology and F. in turn is grooming him for that chair. Consequently Boxer finds it politically advantageous to act as F's terrier to bark and snap at Reconstructionism. I started out the answer to Boxer's article, and I got tired after having dealt with his general characterization of the "Guide" as secular, irreverent of the "classic past" and revolutionary instead of evolutionary. I cannot afford however to let him get away with impunity and much as I hate to waste my time on this snapping terrier I must show him a stick and chase him away. Not having the patience to write out my answer in the usual fashion, I shall resort to recording it in this Journal, which is the only friend I have who is interested in what I have to say, and who stimulates me to think through and express in detail what is on my mind.

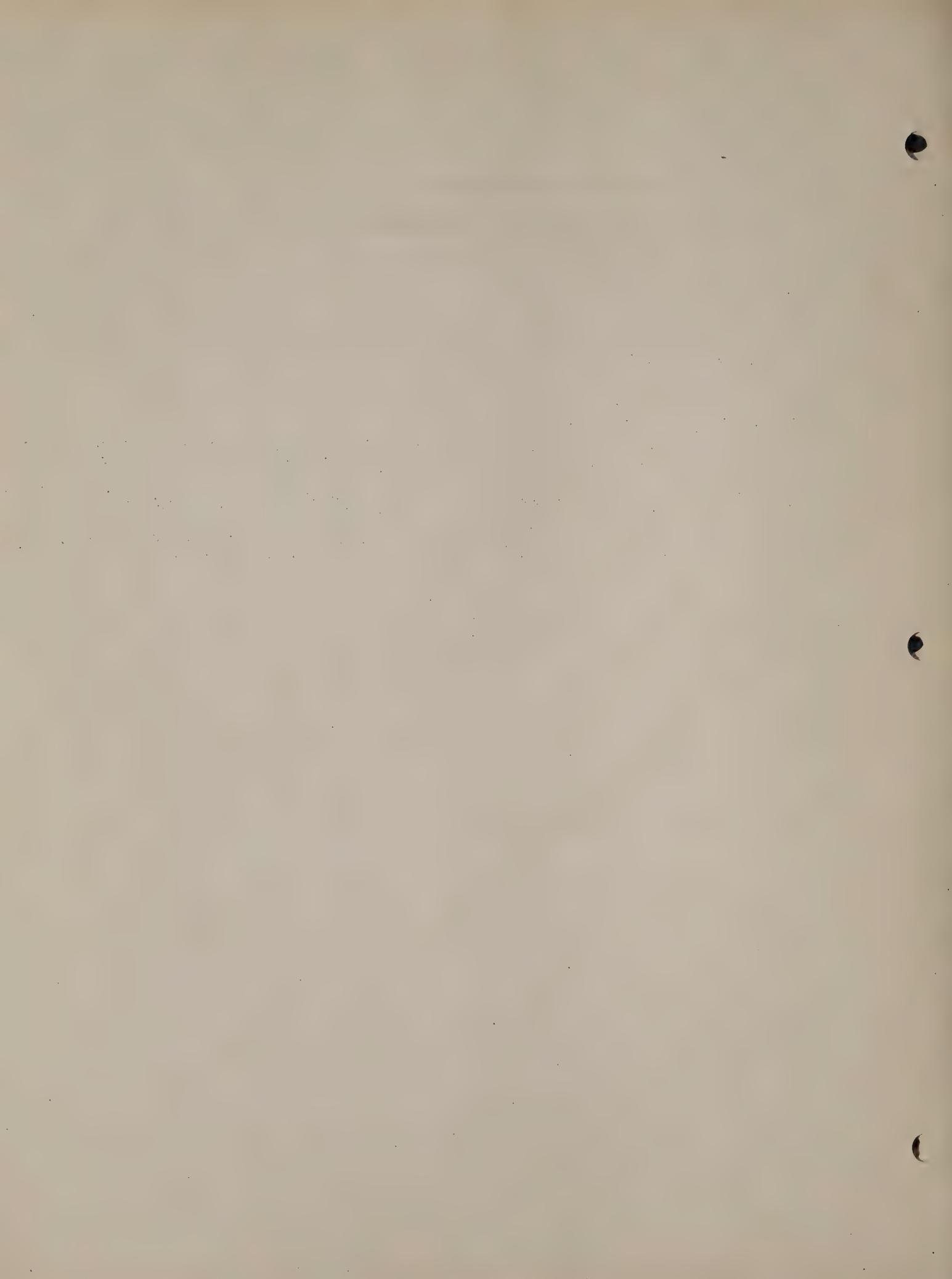


In the first section Boxer states what he regards as the traditional rationale for the observance of religious ceremonials and what in his opinion is the alternative offered by Reconstructionism. Both statements are only half true and are therefore completely confusing and misleading.

His version of the traditional rationale reads as follows: "Tradition rationalizes Jewish observance by linking it with the divine will which it is man's transcendent duty to obey." This is only a half-truth. When we want to know the whole truth concerning the traditional rationale of Jewish observances it is advisable to consult Maimonides who reproduces faithfully the teaching of the sages concerning the validation of the observances.

"Know" says Maimonides (Introd. to Comm. on Mishna) "that every precept which God gave to Moses he gave together with its interpretation...e.g. when God said to Moses 'Ye shall dwell in booths seven days (Lev. 23) he let him know at the same time that only men are in duty bound to dwell in booths but not women, that those who are ill are exempt, that the covering must be earth grown providing it is not made into vessels, that one must eat, drink and sleep in the sukkah and that its dimensions must not be less than seven in width, seven in length, twenty in height...The same is true of all the 613 commandments and their interpretations."

And in his commentary to Sanhedrin Ch. X where he formulates the thirteen principles of the creed which has become part of the "classic past" we read as follows: "The eighth principle is ~~that~~ that the Torah comes from heaven. This means that we must believe that this whole Torah which was transmitted through Moses our teacher, peace be upon him, is entirely from the mouth of the Almighty, that is to say, it came to Moses entirely from God, blessed be He, in a manner described figuratively in the Torah as speaking. It is not known how it came to Moses, except that he was like a scribe who writes as he is dictated to...and there is no difference between such verses as "and the sons of Ham were Kush and Mizraim" or "the name of his wife was Mahatabel" and the verses "I am the Lord thy God" or "Hear O Israel." They call come directly from the mouth of the Almighty. The ninth principle refers to the transmission of the Torah. The Torah was transmitted by God the creator, blessed be He

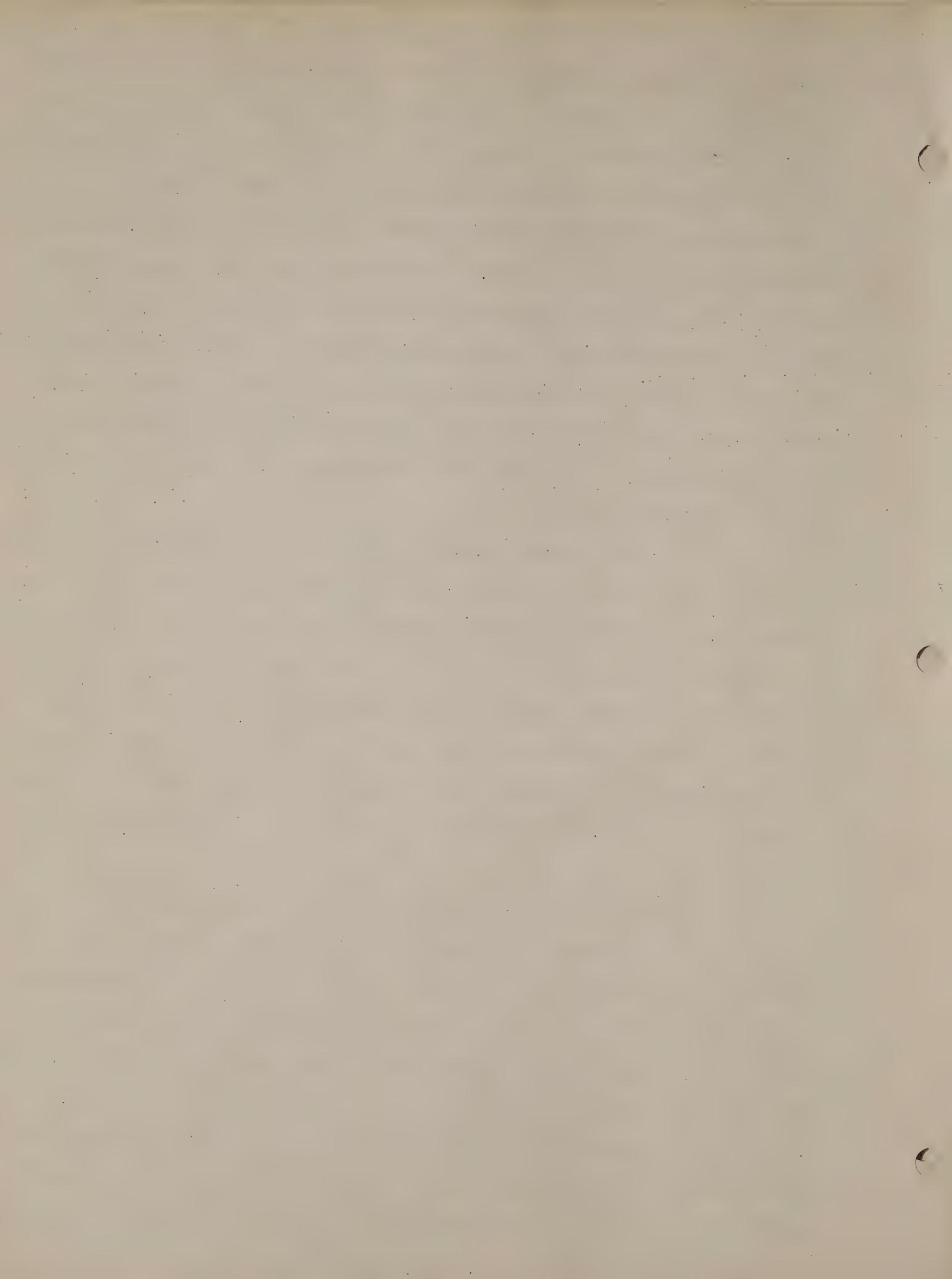


and by none else. Nothing must be added nor anything taken away either from the written law or the oral law." If Dr. Boxer had really meant by such a phrase as "linking it (the observance) with the divine will" what tradition understands by it, he would never have permitted his name to appear for a number of years as associate editor of this magazine and now as contributing editor. Nor would he have wasted precious typewriter ribbon in trying to confute us. It is quite apparent that he has broken with the traditional version of what constitutes linking a religious observance with the divine will. It would have helped to clarify the atmosphere if he were either to admit or deny that fact expressly. If I were to believe for one moment that Dr. Boxer subscribes to the traditional version of the connection between a rite and the divine will, I would stop at this point and simply add that we speak different languages of thought.

But if I am right in assuming that Dr. Boxer no longer accepts the traditional version of the connection between religious observances and the divine will, I must conclude that he has arrived at his own version of that connection not on the basis of any special revelation vouchsafed to him, but entirely on the basis of his own thinking. This is rather shocking for one who admonishes us to have our Guide rooted in a profound reverence for the classic past. Whatever validity his own version can have must derive from the same reasoning process as most of us engage in when we try to think and must consequently be subject to the ordinary rules of logic.

What Dr. Boxer says about the traditional conception of Jewish observances is only half true since he words that conception in such ambiguous fashion that it applies also to his own belief concerning the historic origin of the observances, a belief which from the traditional standpoint is rank heresy. His version of Jewish tradition is as much like Jewish tradition as a bear in a menagerie is like the constellation Bear in the heavens.

Now let us see how after using the method of half truth for self defense he regards himself sufficiently expert in it to employ it in attack. He represents the Reconstructionist rationale of religious observances as being the "sociological"



one that they evolve naturally out of the desire of the group to "edify itself" and to have the individual express his identification with the group." Note here the misleading use of the word "rationale." Granted that Reconstructionists avail themselves of the knowledge with regard to the origin and development of rites supplied by anthropology (not sociology). But origin and development are different categories from purpose. The purpose for which a table is used, and which constitutes its rationale cannot be inferred from the wood out of which it is made. The purpose which the observances are to serve and which is their rationale do not derive from their history but from the content of spiritual life which those who practice them happen to have attained. It is this purpose which in our opinion links them with the divine will, though we frankly give a different content to the connection with the divine will from that which tradition gives to it.

Dr. Boxer's statement "The ultimate logic of this position is to banish a transcendent God from human life" might under certain circumstances be correct if "this position" i.e. the sociological, were actually the one we take.

Wednesday, December 17, 1941

Here again he employs the tactic of half truth. ✓ It is true that we reckon with the genesis and development of observances. But it is false and misleading to charge us with doing so for the sake of establishing their rationale. To what end we reckon with the history of observances will be clearly indicated later. But as far as their validation or rationale is concerned nothing could link them more closely with the divine will than two-fold purpose which we repeatedly emphasize: the survival of Israel and the salvation of the individual Jew. In fact it was in order to remove any such deliberate misinterpretation of our attitude toward observances that we have studiously avoided the use of the term "folkways" in the suggested Guide or prospectus. We have found that despite the sharp distinction we drew between "folkways" and "religious folkways" our detractors insisted upon ignoring it. We have therefore dropped the use of the term. Yet Dr. Boxer knowing to what extent it has been played up by our opponents to make us out to be secularists, deliberately reintroduces that term into the discussion.

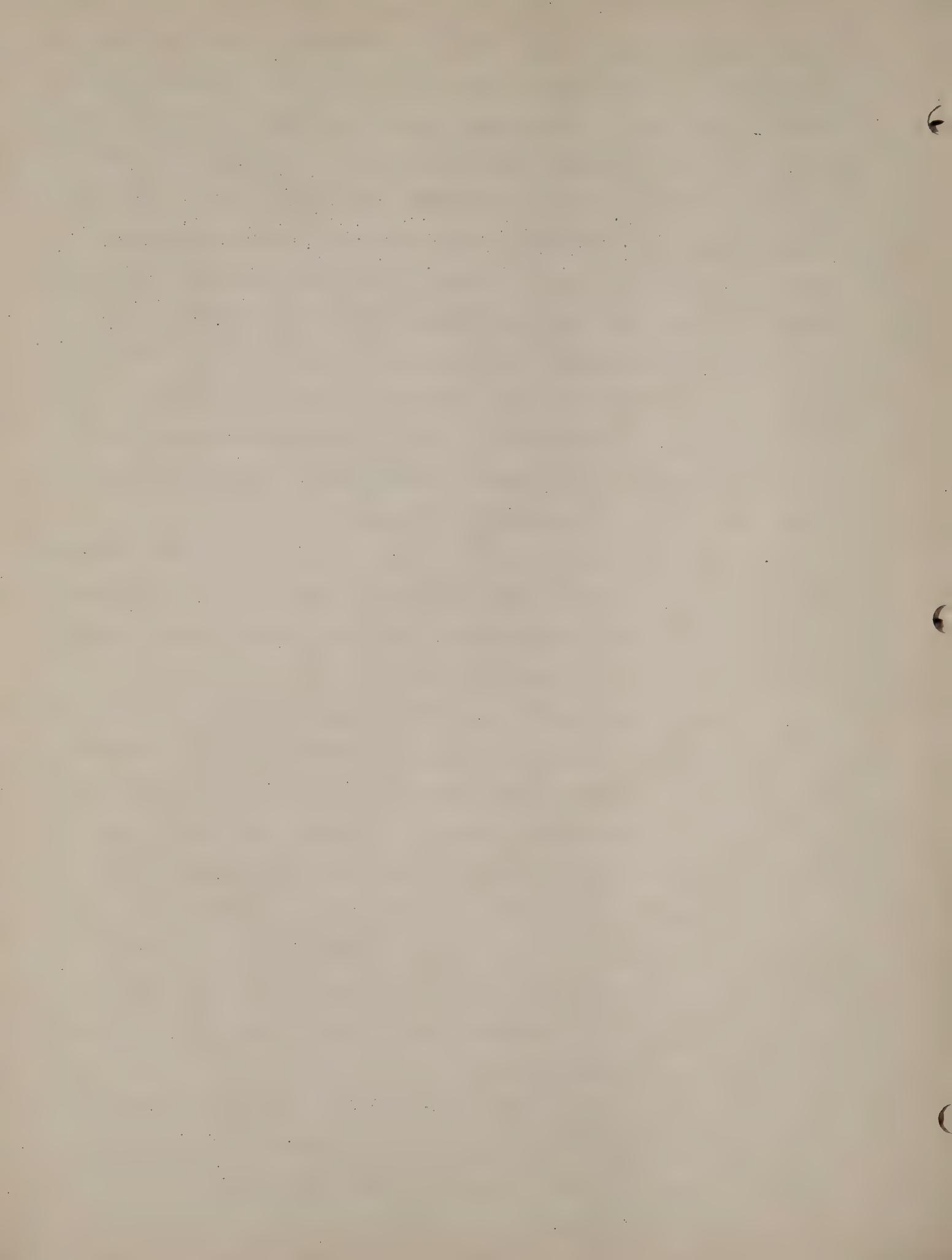


Proceeding then from the half truth concerning our attitude toward religious observance he presumes to charge us with what is tantamount to camouflage if not hypocrisy. "Regardless of what verbiage we may use in dressing up the new ideology it is not a religious ideology. It may be a variety of humanism, but it has no relation to classic religion." Again we have the term "classic" thrown at us, as if Dr. Boxer discovered the only other ideology besides the traditional one that deserves to be called "religion." For again we must be reminded that Dr. Boxer's religion is not the traditional or what he calls the "classic religion." It is a brand of his own which he apparently regards as the only one that may be patented and bear the label "religion." This really reduces itself to a contest in patent litigation and it may turn out that Dr. Boxer is the original simon pure Reconstructionist who discovered the only genuine reinterpretation and revaluation of tradition and that we have all plagiarized his discovery.

II The idea developed in this section is the following: Neither "self-fulfillment" nor Jewish group survival is an adequate justification for ritual observances. The prospectus which maintains that both are necessary falsely charges Conservative Judaism with stressing only Jewish group survival.

It is quite apparent that Dr. Boxer is so intent upon maligning the prospectus that he cannot refrain from what is known in debate as the trick of diversion. He makes it appear at first as though we advocated "individual satisfaction" as such, and considered the individual the standard of all values. And then in the next paragraph deliberately makes it appear as though we made group survival "an end in itself." It is apparent that he expects to overwhelm us by the method of dividing and conquering. What we sho strenuously insist upon as inseparable and indivisible, namely the salvation or self realization of the individual and the immortality and creativity of the group, he misrepresents as a mechanical addition of two purposes, and then proceeds to refute each.

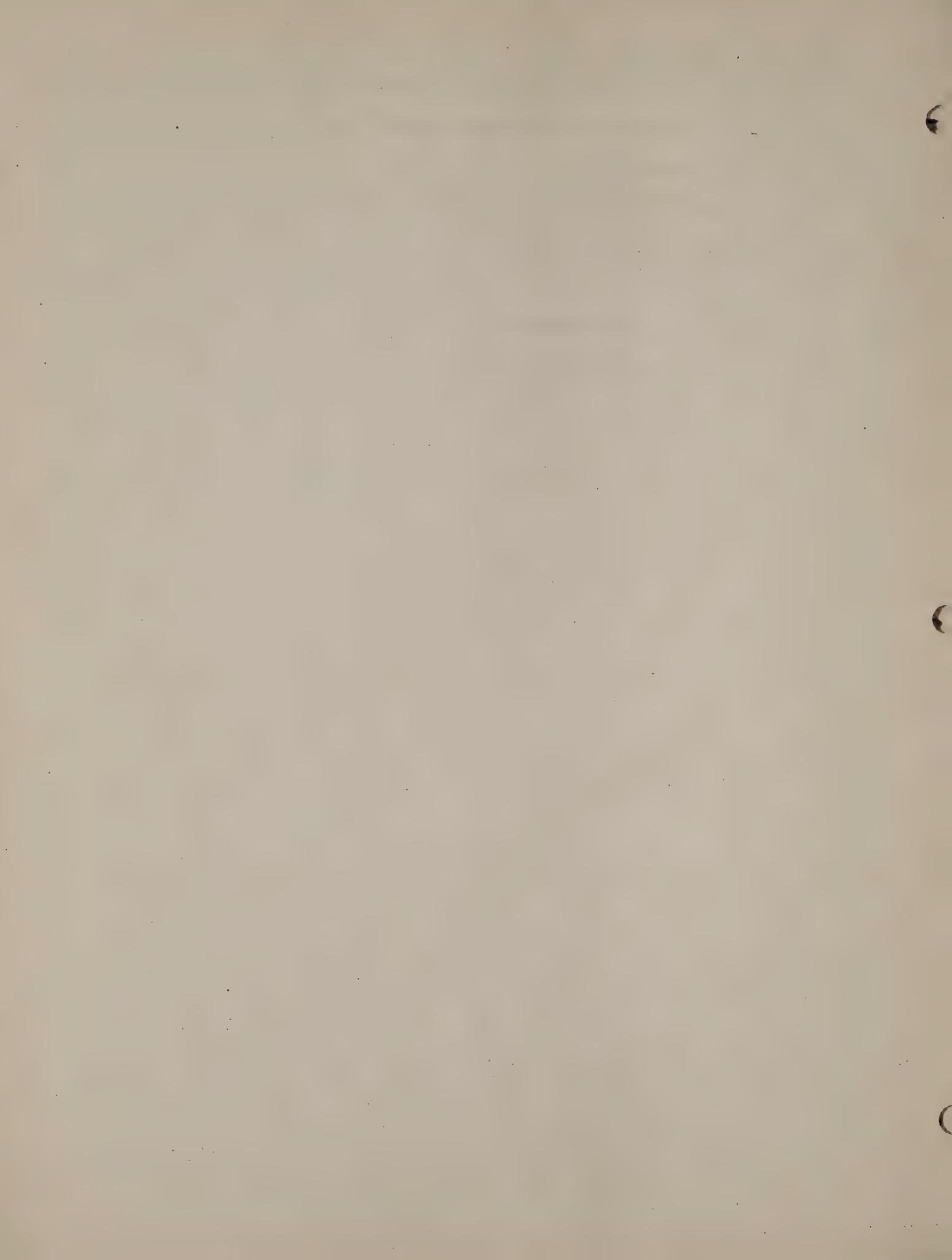
It is remarkable indeed how what is treated as a "weakness" in our position is heartily approved in the position taken by Prof. Finkelstein who is quoted in this section as saying that to engage in Jewish communion with God "is essential for our individual welfare and happiness as well as for the enhancement of our



usefulness to the world." Does Dr. Boxer really think that this ideal is not one which to Hitler "may mean setting the world aflame with strife and hate?" It is apparent that the introduction of Hitler's name is only a diversion which has no bearing on the argument.

In all this Dr. Boxer is still trying to formulate what he regards as the Reconstructionist "rationale" for ritual observances. This time under the categories of "function" and "justification." As against his mangled version of the Reconstructionist position he quotes passages from articles by Dr. Max Arzt and Prof. Louis Finkelstein taken entirely out of their context for the purpose of defining what he regards as the conservative position toward ritual observances.¹⁶ Passage from Dr. Finkelstein's address on "Tradition in the Making" does indeed set forth his position toward ritual observance. That position is entirely in keeping with the neo-Orthodox version of traditional Judaism and not at all with that which has come to be designated as conservative Judaism, if such a thing exists at all. The fact is that the term ~~Conservative Judaism~~ was originally appropriated by a limited group of Jews in England. The main text which sets forth the philosophy is Morris Joseph's ~~Judaism~~ "Judasim A Creed and " That term has been deliberately avoided by those who generally figure in the lay mind as the protagonists of conservative Judaism. Zachariah Frankel called it Historical Judaism. So did the late Dr. Schechter and so do the spokesmen of the enlarged Seminary. Dr. Morris the president of the old Seminary was identified as Orthodox and not as conservative. In the address which Prof. Finkelstein delivered on the occasion of the semi-centenary of the Seminary which was intended to define the position of the Seminary no mention whatever is made of such a thing as ~~conservative~~ Judaism.

What Prof. Finkelstein has to say in the paragraph quoted by Dr. Boxer is both clear and unmistakable in its meaning. It is this: The duty of studying and practicing the Torah and mizvot in the traditional manner and spirit devolves on every Jew. That duty is not intended "as a sacrifice for the preservation of a mystic entity called the Jewish people" but our individual happiness and "enhancement of and usefulness to the world." The Jewish people is only a means to that end. The Jewish people exists for its traditions not the traditions for the Jewish people.



Prof. Finkelstein is undoubtedly able to defend this view on the score of what to him is its inherent rruth and consistency. But it is not defensible as a version of traditional Judaism from its own point of view. In the above formulation he approximates the position of Samson Raphael Hirsch and the Breuers father and son rather than that of Frankl and Schechter. For that reason I do not think that the above quotation can be regarded as setting forth the theology of conservative Judaism which is as yet in a highly nebulous state.

The quotation from Dr. Arzt on the other hand, who has been very articulate with regard to conservative Judaism, is apropos. But to get the full significance of that quotation it is necessary to read it in its context. It is taken from a lengthy critique of Judaism As A Civilization. Like Dr. Boxer he hammers away at the concept of ritual observances as folkways. But although he misses fire for the same reason that Dr. Boxer does and because he fails to reckon with the sharp distinction ~~I~~ drawn between religious and cultural folkways, he at least recognizes that we are trying to have the observances serve as a means of communing with God. It is passing strange that Dr. Boxer finds advisable to stop his quotation just at the point where its context begins to have a bearing on the question at issue. The very next sentences read as follows: "Here I quote against ~~Dr.~~ Dr. Kaplan's book 'Jewish customs were more consciously and deliberately a means of directing attention to the experiences in which the divine manifested itself than the customs of any other people' (438.) Dr. Kaplan gives us a splendid revaluation of the edifying custom of reciting prayers before and after the meal. ~~that~~ But once we have ~~so far~~ accustomed ourselves, through a process of self-education to recite a prayer with a certain degree of awareness of what it implies, we can see how it is possible for an ordinary meal to become the occasion for cosmic orientation" (422).

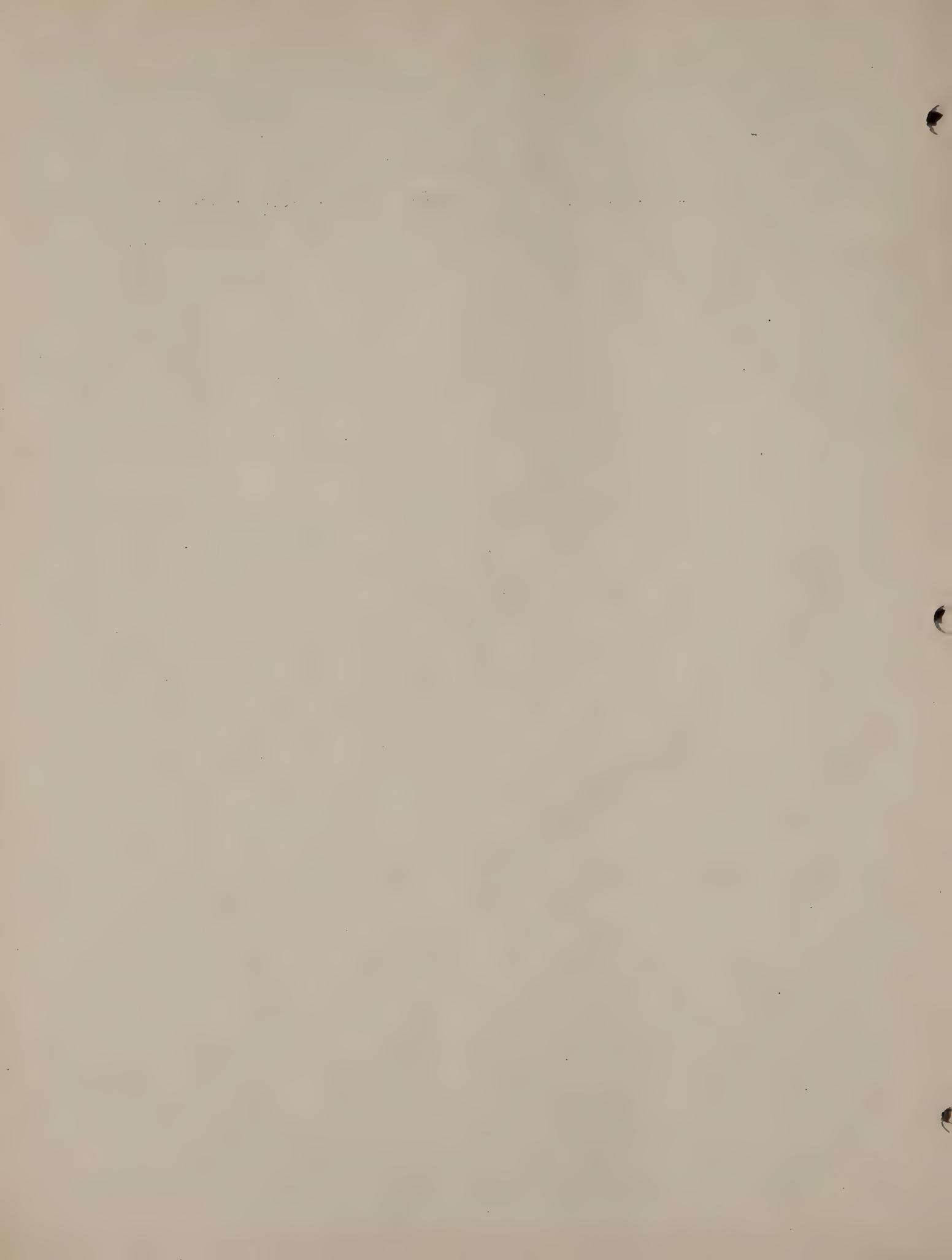
But the main trouble with Dr. Boxer's critique is that it misses the fundamental significance of the discussion with regard to the rational~~s~~ function or justification of the ritual observances. He holds forth on that subject as though we were engaged in a debate whether or not we need ritual observances. He fails to realize that this is not at all the problem before us. Our problem is: In the light of the conditions



of life and thought under which we live and which tend to destroy the entire regimen of ritual observance, what shall be done with the traditional regimen, what modifications should be instituted in it, to bring about its reinstatement to some degree at least? (It is at this point that our reckoning with the human aspect of our religious observances with their origin and development helps us. Had we accepted the (p.236) traditional conception of them as dictated by God to Moses we would be in no position to urge their modification. On the other hand from our point of view the very urge to modify them is dictated by the desire to link them with the divine will. If Dr. Boxer had taken the trouble to read from the very next page of the one from which he quotes Dr. Arzt's statement he might have placed the entire train of his thought on the track, whereas now it is entirely derailed. Here is what Dr. Arzt says:

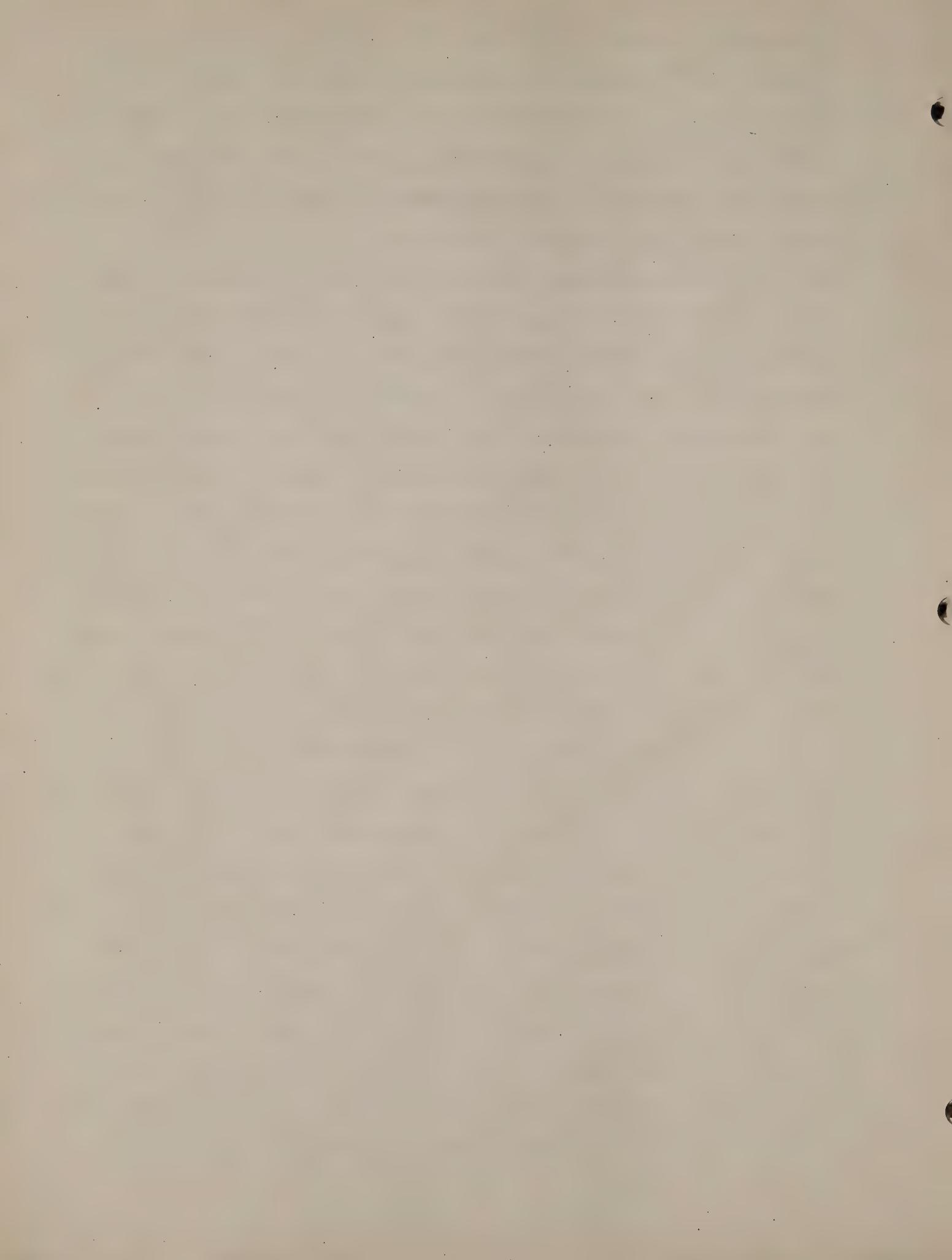
"The main motivation behind Dr. Kaplan's designation of the ceremonies as selectivity folkways is his desire to grapple with the problem of ~~extinction~~ in their observance. I realize the severity of this problem. The Shulchan Aruch is fast becoming a compendium of laws violated by most Jews. We cannot consistently insist that the mizvoth are the Jewish means of communion with the divine and then close our eyes to the wide spread neglect and desecration of the very means. We must reckon not only with their purpose as sanctified modes of communion with the God of Israel, but also with the stubborn situations which make the observance of many of them well-nigh impossible. There must be established some principle of personal selection in terms of one's particular and peculiar situation (italics mine). Thus speaks not an adherent of the Historical School but of Reconstructionism, although Dr. Arzt wants to be known as a "conservative."

There are distinct differences between Dr. Arzt's position and that of Reconstructionism, especially with regard to the question of treating the ritual observances under the category of law. Nevertheless he says so many things that are in conflict with what has hitherto been identified as Conservatism that one wonders whether he can very well be quoted as their spokesman. For example take the following: "We had better speed our efforts to prevent further unfortunate



consequences of the arrested development of the laws of divorce and halizah. They constitute an immediate and imperative challenge to our sense of justice and to our ethical responsibility" (p. 214). "There is no question that it is impossible to observe the detailed dietary laws in extensive travel. We must once for all advocate a double standard of observance one for the home and one for occasions away from home" (italics mine)

The foregoing suggestions are a kind which were never breathed before Reconstructionism came on the scene. Whatever there existed that ceased to be Orthodox and had not yet become Reform forever and anon invoked the principle of "catholic Israel" whenever the question arose with regard to any modification in the traditional system of observances. This concept which Dr. Schechter coined under the influence of High Church surroundings to express a principle of dealing with changes in the Law, which had been enunciated before him by Zachariah Frankel. It is that principle to which the prospectus referred when it spoke of Conservative Judaism as stressing the purpose of group survival. An analysis of that principle would render this reply unduly long. I must therefore confine myself to pointing out that it was intended to serve as a guide as to which modifications are acceptable and which unacceptable. The criterion is the spirit of the unity and universality of the Jewish people. If a modification violates that spirit it is to be prohibited. What else does this criterion aim at, if not the preservation of the unity of Israel, which is only a gauier term for the survival of the Jewish people? To that unity according to the Historical School the individual was expected to sacrifice his personal welfare. This is what the prospectus ~~efflux~~ referred to as constituting overemphasis on group survival as against individual self realization, whenever a traditional practice led to a conflict between the two. The Conservative Judaism against which that criterion was directed is the one that has been in existence for over half a century, if not longer. It is not Dr. Arzt's version of conservative Judaism which has been too much infested by Reconstructionism to be set up as an official version.

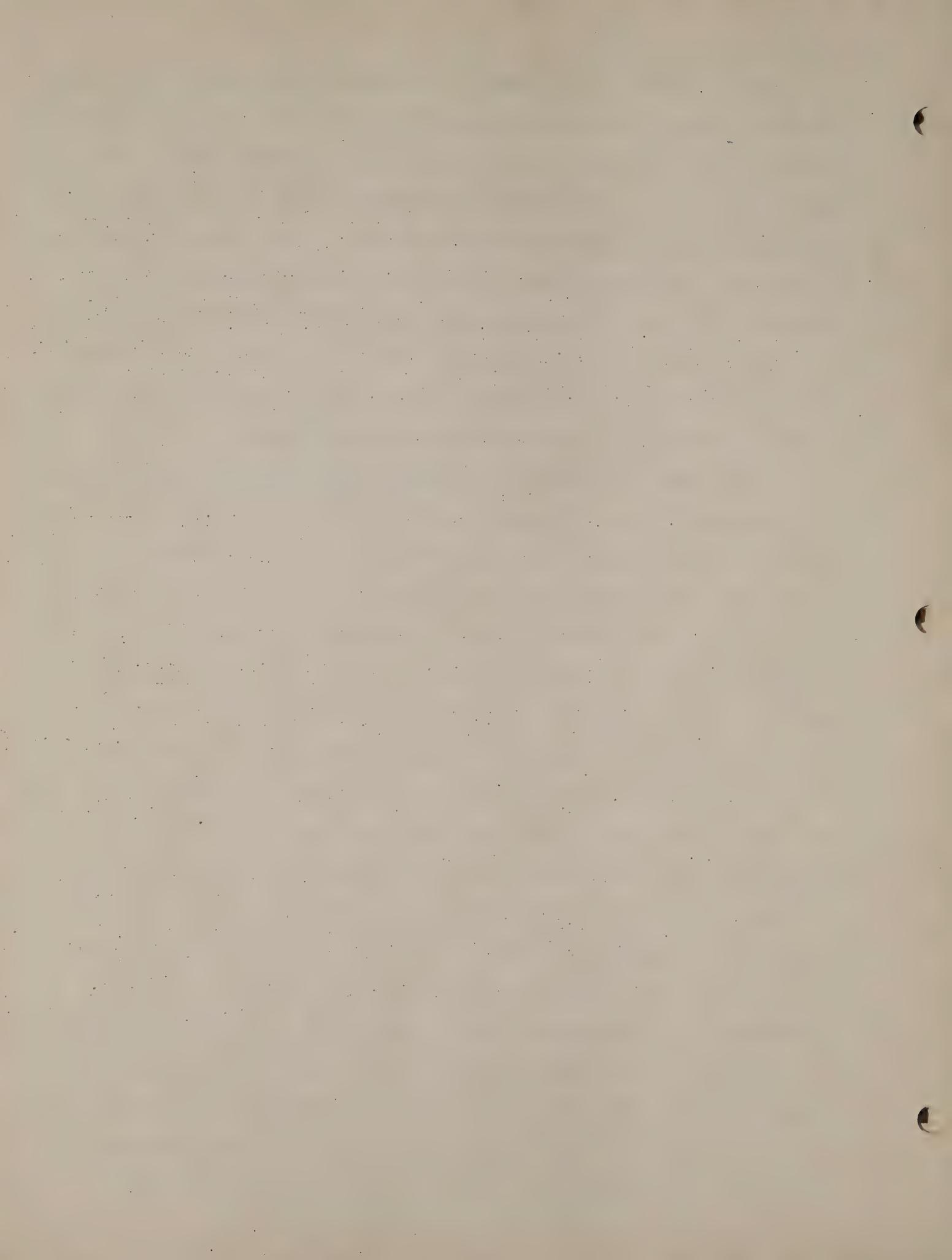


Thursday, Dec. 18, 1941

III This section is a lesson in theology set forth in encyclical fashion to combat the error of Reconstructionism which is assumedly based upon "the folk-way approach to religion." Dr. Boxer hopes to drive home the charge that those who are responsible for the prospectus on "Ritual Usage" are positivists, naturalists, secularists, humanists but not theists. He does not use the ugly word "atheists" but he certainly means it as is evident from his assumption that there can be only two interpretations of life. Since, according to him, we are not theists, the inevitable conclusion is that we are atheists. Page the neo-Thomist Mortimer Adler whose doctrine Dr. Boxer here advances and consult "Mein Kampf" whose advice in combating opponents he here follows.

"Modern man, like the man of antiquity" pontificates Dr. Boxer, "has only two alternatives in his interpretation of life, the secularistic or the theistic." Nothing is further from the truth with regard to the man of antiquity or to the modern man. The man of antiquity, by and large, could as little be a secularist or an atheist as he could be an aviator. Not even the Epicureans were atheists. They simply denied to the gods any share in human affairs. Even when we find in Psalm 10 the statement that the ~~fool~~ saith in his heart there is no God we must read the rest of that Psalm to get the actual meaning of that statement and there only four verses away we learn that it means that God pays no attention to man's doings. Anyone in the least familiar with the history of ideas and beliefs can understand why before the advent of philosophy and science such an interpretation of life as naturalism and positivism was absolutely inconceivable. The man of antiquity we are concerned in at this point is the Jewish prophet, sage or scribe of the pre-philosophic and pre-scientific era. He could not even contemplate any interpretation of life however remotely related to naturalism.

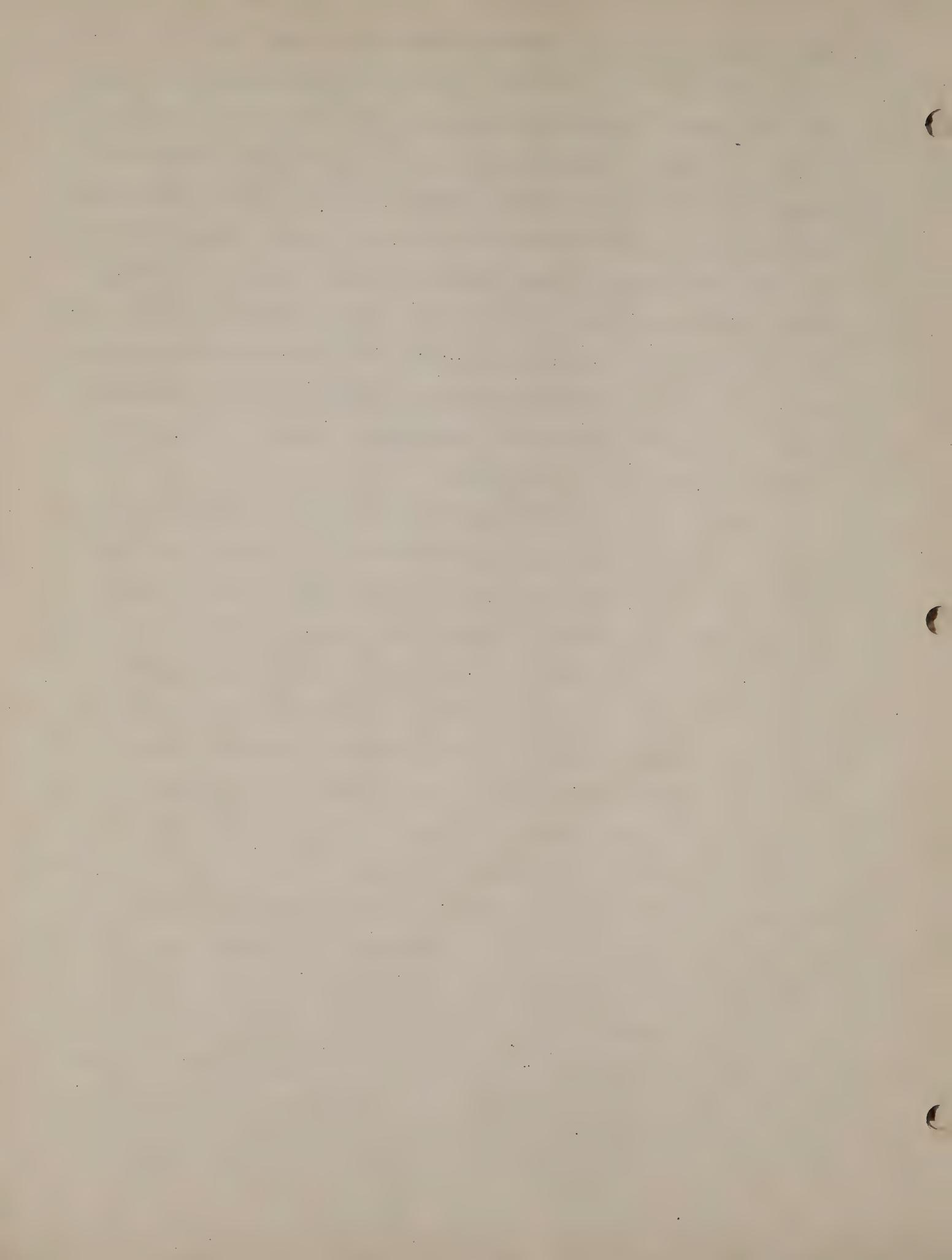
As for the modern man this statement of Dr. Boxer's is untrue for the very opposite reason. The modern man has a vast number of alternative interpretations of life. The trick of reducing numerous alternatives to two and demanding acceptance of one or the other is the familiar one of the lawyer who tries to



disqualify the witness on the stand by asking him to answer "yes" or "no" to the question: Have you left off beating your wife? How many alternative interpretations of life may be learned on consulting any elementary book on philosophy or religion. Take e.g. the following from the Table of Contents of a book on "American Philosophies of Religion" by Wieman and Meland. The authors enumerate as many as twelve alternative philosophies. Among these are "Aesthetic naturalists, evolutionary theists, cosmic theists, religious humanists and empirical theists. And please note: the last four categories are bracketed under the heading "Rooted in Tradition of Naturalism." But these men among whom one finds A.N. Whitehead, Robert L. Calhoun and Shailer Mathews never sat at the feet of Mortimer Adler. Hence they are all positivists (sc. atheists) according to Dr. Boxer's oversimplified classification.

The above reference to "Mein Kampf" as containing the method employed by Dr. Boxer is suggested by his incessant reiteration of the charge that we are positivists (sc. atheists). The absurdity of this charge should be apparent to any one who takes the trouble to note that the very first group of ritual usages to which we turned our attention is "Home Devotion and Synagogue Worship." This method of attaching a stigma to your opponent by unremitting repetition of a lie is the familiar one which has been used with deadly effect against us Jews. And the more absurd the lie the more certain is its spread. Such unfortunately is the poison gas to which some of our own "zealots" for God choose to operate.

As for the learning displayed in this chapter we regret to say that it is mostly fake. There is no warrant whatever in the reference to Baba Batra 14b-15a for such a statement as the following: "The hands of Moses and various other preachers and prophets penned the text in the document of Divine Revelation -- the Torah." That passage discusses the possibility merely of regarding the last eight verses as having been written by Joshua. But the entire spirit of that passage as of the whole of Jewish tradition is based on the supernatural conception of the actual manner in which the very words of the Torah were transmitted.



Has Dr. Boxer forgotten altogether the traditional category of the supernatural? To equate it with "transcendent" is all very well for us Reconstructionists who recognize in that very equating a departure from the tradition. But for Dr. Boxer nothing has happened in the last 150 years to necessitate any departure whatever from tradition.

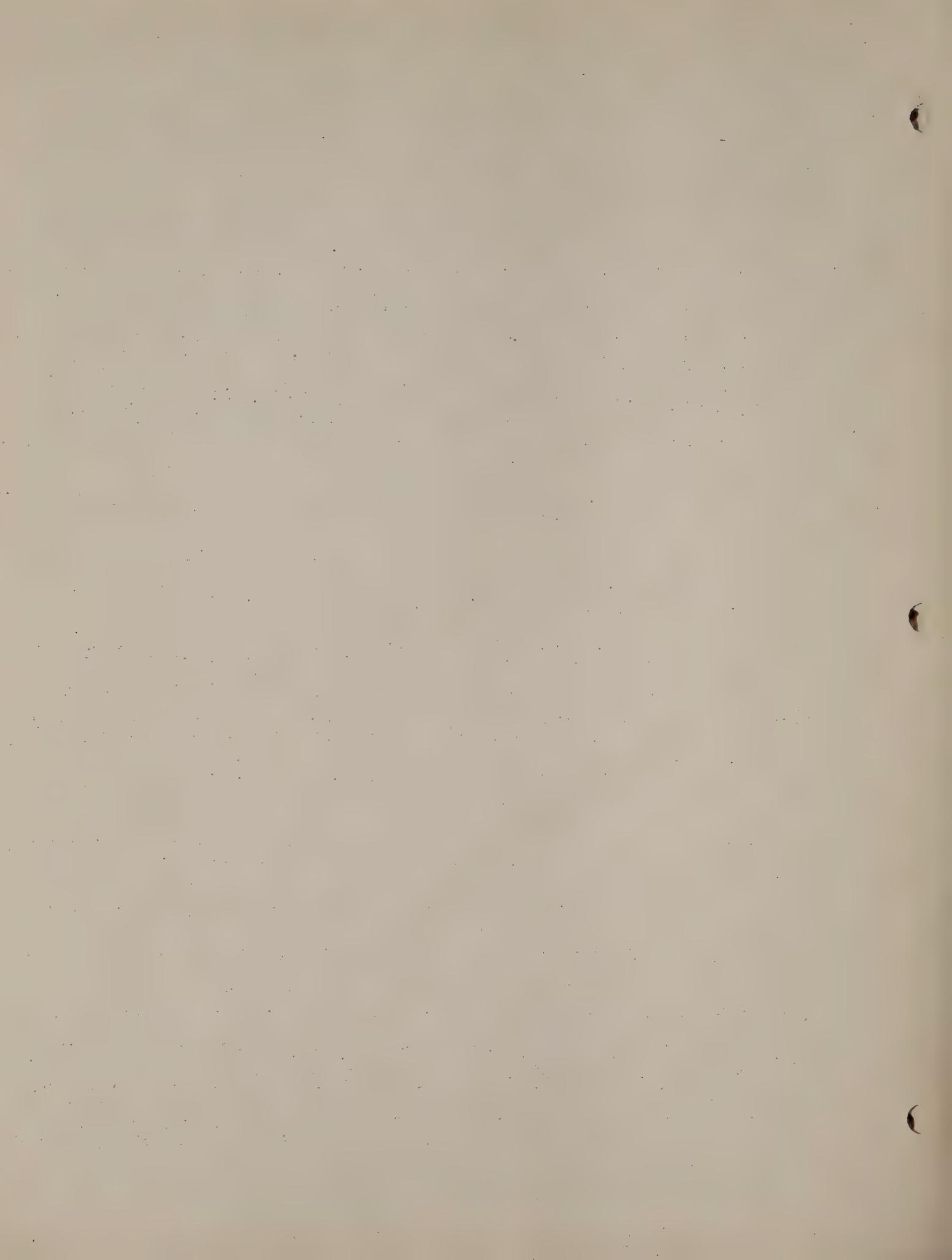
Equally unsound is the disquisition on the difference between Isaiah and Ezekiel. It is based on a misinterpretation of what Raba says in Hagigah 13b. To account for the difference between Isaiah's brief description of God's presence and the elaborate one given by Ezekiel. Raba says the case may be compared to the difference between the way a villager would describe a king and the way a city dweller would describe him. The implication is that because the villager sees the king once in a lifetime, he is certain to dwell on every detail of the entourage of the king. Thus Ezekeil who did not behold the divine presence often (because he lived outside the law of Israel). For Isaiah however who could visit the Temple beholding the divine presence was a daily experience. But the notion that Ezekiel was a provincial prophet is sheer nonsense.

By this time it is quite evident that it would serve no useful purpose to discuss the statements in the subsequent sections and to expose their sophistries and distortions of the traditions which he adduces as supporting them. If Conservative Judaism will allow itself to be championed by protagonists who resort to polemics of the kind employed by Dr. Boxer it is likely to enrich the vocabulary to describe distorted thinking. The sophists have given us the word "sophistry" and the Jesuits "Jesuity." Henceforth any combination of specious reasoning, fake learning and distortion of facts is likely to be known as "conservatry."

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Sunday, December 21, 1941

On further consideration of the advisability of entering into polemics with Boxer and publishing the foregoing reply to the article which he has sent in to the Reconstructionist I became apprehensive of the effect which such polemics would have on Jewish life in general and our movement in particular. It is



bound to augment the divisive forces among us, and thus to defeat the principal aim of our movement, namely to achieve some creative element of unity. Even if I win the war of words I lose the peace of deeds. I have therefore asked Boxer to come to see me this coming Tuesday in the hope that I might persuade him to withdraw his article without his claiming afterwards that we clamped down on his criticism of the proposed "Guide."

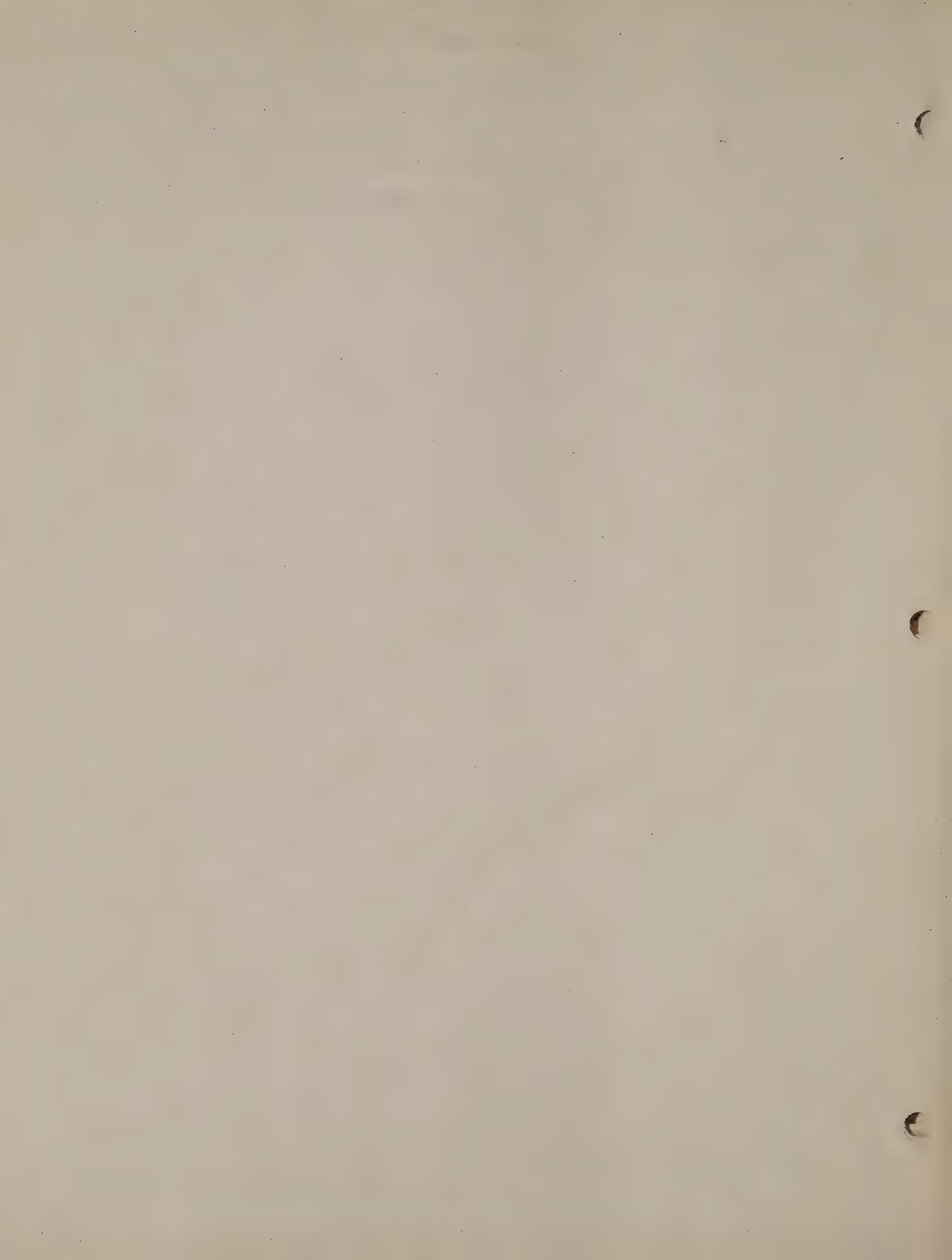
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Tuesday, December 23, 1941

Last week at the SAJ was quite a notable one. The Sabbath was the sixth day of Hanukkah and the first day of Rosh Hodesh. In addition there was to be a short service on the occasion of our country's entry into the war. The choral group consisting of about 25 women of the SAJ and about 5 men whom Judith had been training were scheduled to sing two songs in honor of Hanukkah and I was to give the sermon. I somehow could not relax while I was speaking; the needed words did not come in time and I felt tense almost all through the course of the sermon. This feeling started almost in the first sentence when, by a slip of the tongue, I said "the persecution of the war" instead of "the prosecution of the war." We had a good attendance. I did not speak long and everything else came off smoothly, so that the people were pleased.

In the afternoon we had a guest speaker at the Oneg Shabbat, Miss Gizella Warburg who has charge of fund raising activities for Aliyah and now I believe she is also active in the Pluyot Hechalutz movement. She gave a neat little talk on the Hechalutz. Although I had not been scheduled to say anything I supplemented her remarks and in that way emphasized the need and value of the Hechalutz from the standpoint of the gloomy prospects for the Jews both in Europe and America even when the allies shall have won the war.

Sunday night the thirty new members who have recently been added to the SAJ on the basis of \$25 annual membership dues, were formally inducted. Before the induction ceremony Ira led the gathering in singing and held a mock radio contest. He handled his part superbly. I gave the induction address which

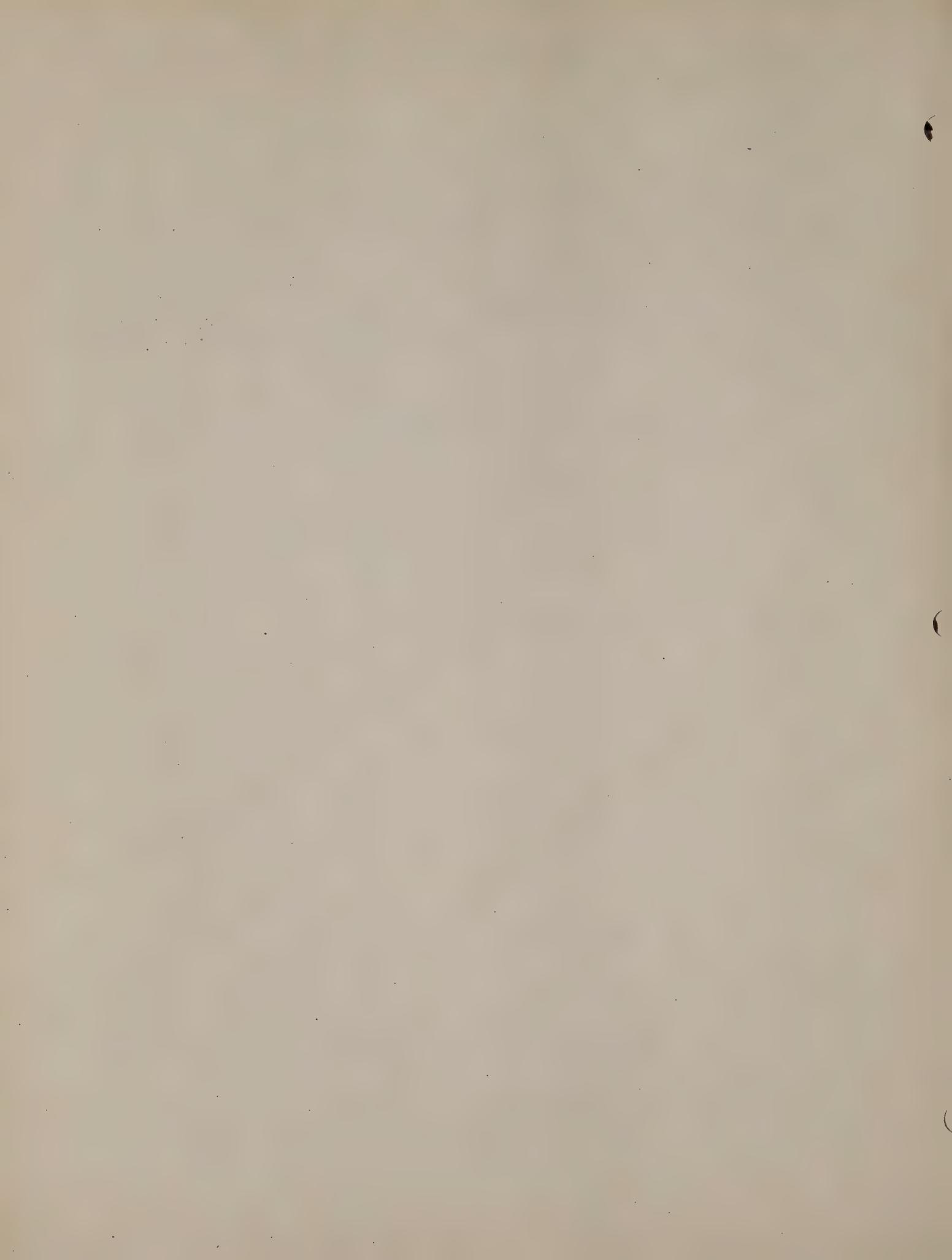


lasted about 25 minutes. Those present were very well impressed and voted the evening a great success.

Yesterday Abraham Barras a student of the Teachers Institute in his third year came to tell me that at the insistent urging of his parents he is withdrawing from the Institute and joining the Teachers Institute of the Yeshiva because the latter institution makes it possible for its students to be exempted from the draft. The Yeshivah recognizes them as theological students and therefore brackets them with those who are training for the ministry.

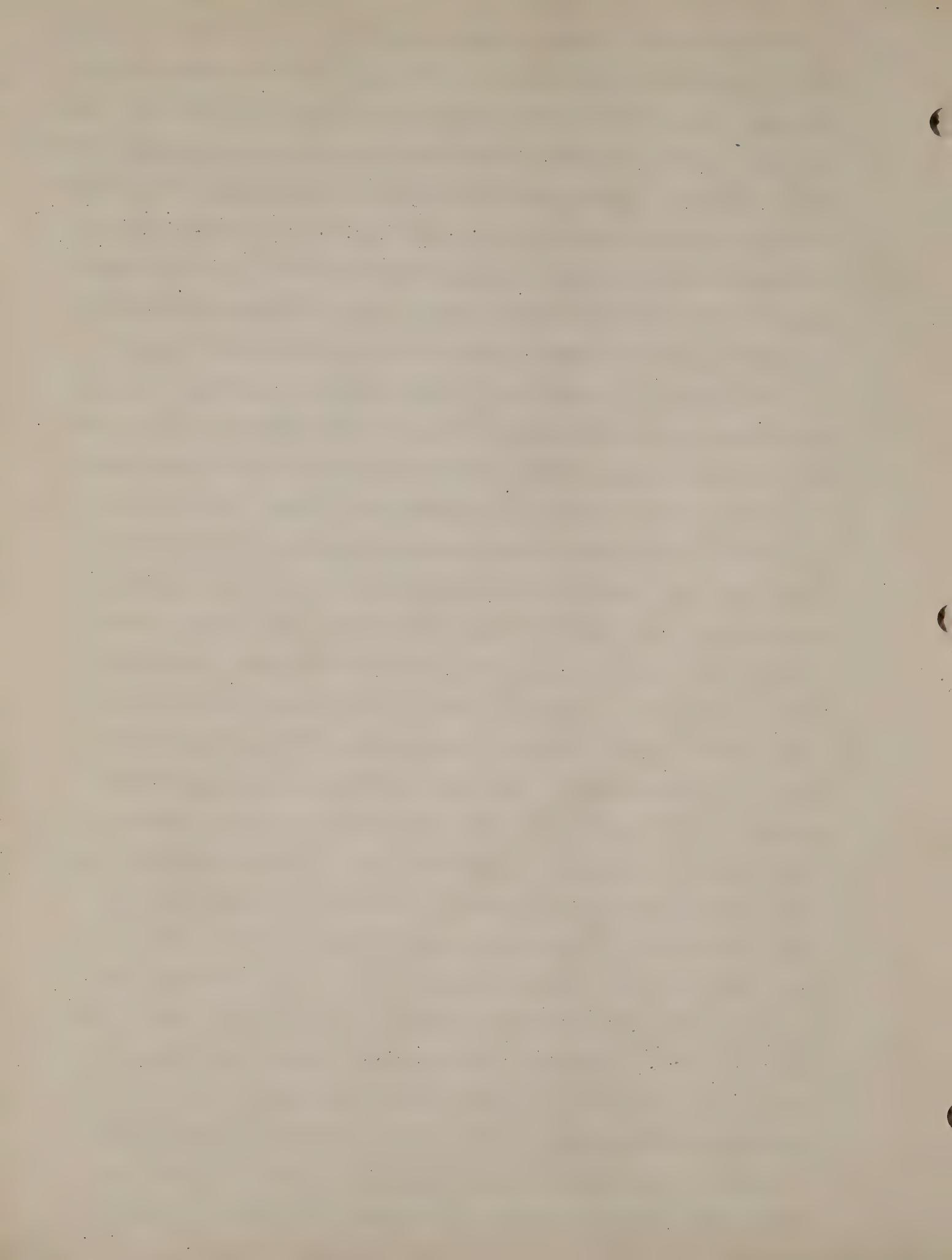
Some time ago the question of the status of students of the Seminary outside the Rabbinical School came up at a Seminary faculty meeting, and the sentiment was almost unanimous that such students be not regarded as theological students, even where there had been a bona fide declaration long before the war of intention to prepare for entering the rabbinical school. In the meantime the Teachers Institute is bound to lose its men students. In addition to the numerous handicaps under which it is laboring, such as the negative attitude on the part of the Seminary authorities led by Finkelstein, the more intensive training and dormitory facilities plus college education afforded by the Yeshiva the difficulty of getting jobs for the graduates in the weekday schools which are mostly orthodox, this one of having to compete with a draft exempting institution like the Yeshiva T.I. is likely to ruin our Teachers Institute.

I showed the copy of my reply to Bokser's article to Ira, Eugene and Max Kadushin (who had come in for a few days from Madison, Wis.) and they seemed to feel that I ought to tone it down. On the other hand they were also agreed that Bokser should not be asked to withdraw his article. I have therefore called off my appointment with him for this afternoon.



My mind is all in a whirl. After the strain of the last weekend I feel too tired to attend to routine tasks. Whenever I feel that way I take to the most promiscuous kind of reading of both serious and light stuff. Right now I have on my desk the following which I have been reading from alternately ~~without~~ virtually all day (with the exception of one hour when I had Meyer Fishman of the Jewish Welfare Board come to see me to discuss the organization of Jewish Community) "Sources of Religious Insight" by Royce, "The Crisis of our Age" by Sorokin, Augustine's "Confessions," the most recent issue of the CCAR Yearbook (1941) an abridged version of "Byron in Italy" by Peter Quenell, Byron's Poems.

The outcome of this odd diet is a kind of mental indigestion. I cannot get Sorokin's reactionary scoldings and Royce's pious abstractions to mix with the picaveseque accounts of Byrons amorous adventures or with his sentiments in Don Juan. What becomes of all my theories with regard to making the most out of life. Would Byron have enriched English poetry as he did if he had lived a staid and normal life? Was his complete flouting of conventions a prerequisite to his creativity? No theory, however comprehensive, no type however detailed and well established, will quite cover any single human being" says Quenell. In trying to analyze Byron's numerous philanderings Quenell points out that they are to be explained in terms of psychoogcal rather than physical causes. "Were the sexual impulse always governed by sexual motives," he says, "human relationships would present a somewhat easier study." He finds psychological, glandular, social and literary causes necessary to be taken into account, if we want to understand fully the behavior of a Byron. From Byron's own idea of his life, we gather that he could not have been a very happy man. He did not expect to live long. When he was thirty he was determined, he told his friend Moore that "he would make what he could of the remaineder of his youth. He would work its mine to the last vein... and then good night. He could feel that he had enjoyed and lived. The need of achieving self-possession or integration which Royce regards as common to all mankind and therefore as the initial source of religious insight was furthest from the mind of Byron. He was inwardly the most disintegrated type

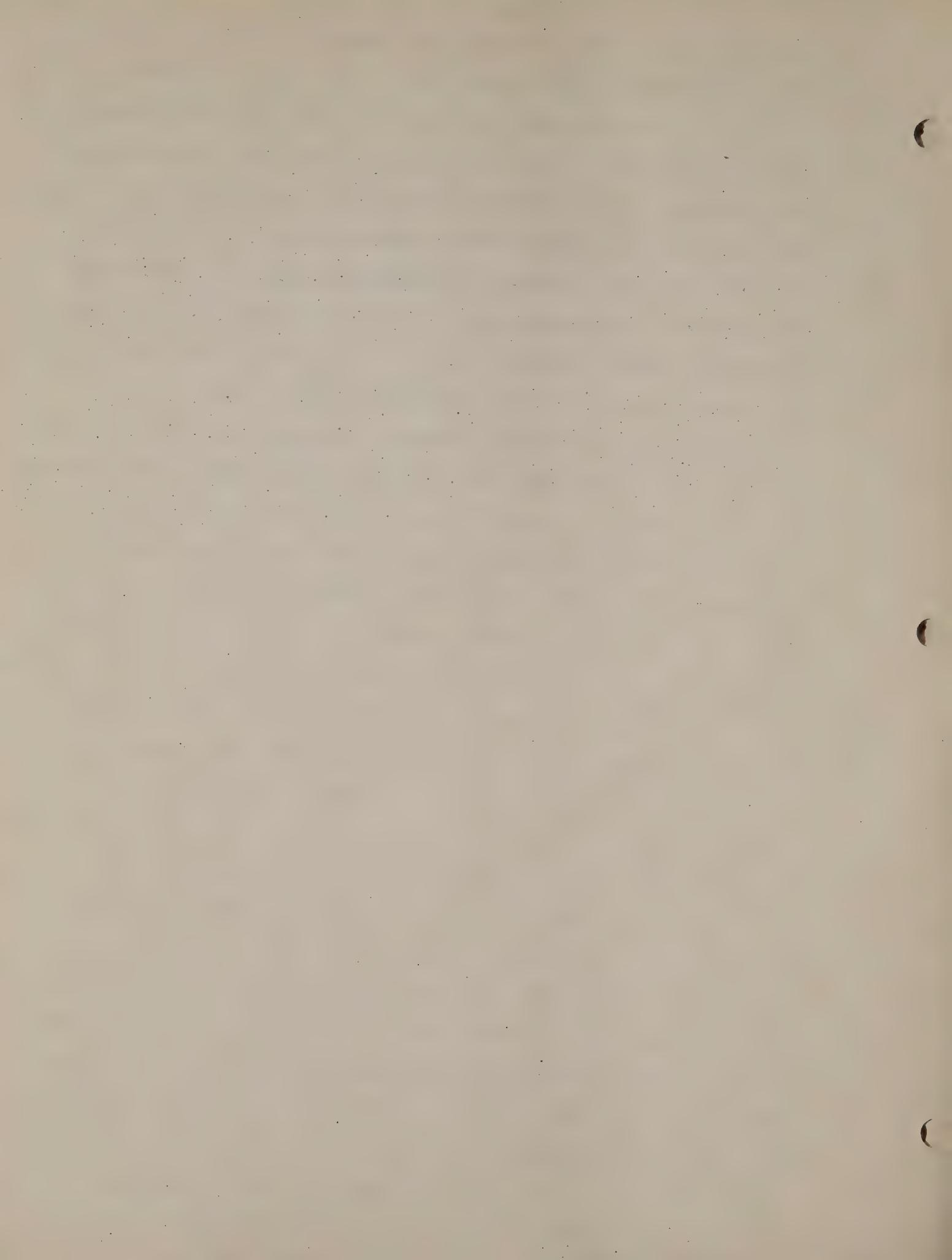


of person outside a lunatic asylum. Yet it may well be that but such inner disintegration he might never have written a single line of his beautiful poetry.

There is one thing however that does emerge from these considerations and that is that great art not only often goes along with individual degeneracy but may also accompany social corruption and cruelty. Wagners music is an illustration of how both individual and social deterioration may dwell together with great music and drama. Perhaps in this instance Sorekin's eternal croakings about sensate culture have some warrant. It may not be fashionable to apply any standards of a moral or social character to artistic expression. Yet the failure to do so may not have done western civilization too much good.

The first time I read Royce's "Sources of Religious Insight" was in 1914. Like most of his writings which I have read this one too raised greater expectations than it fulfills. He has a wholesome sense of reality, but it is neutralized by his idealistic absolutism. I was amazed when I picked up the book again yesterday to discover how much likeness there is between my notion of soterics and his recognition of the centrality of salvation in the understanding of religion. So far he is the third writer I have come across who appreciates the place of the striving after the salvation in human life. The other two are George Foote Moore and Irwin Edman. Of the three Edman has the most comprehensive conception of the meaning of salvation. The other two can think of it only either as the source or objective of religion only. That prevents them from comprehending its far reaching implications for the understanding of all aspects of human life.

The first three chapters in Royce's "Sources etc." have a bearing on the final interests. Self-possession, human brotherhood and cosmic rationality as interpreted in those chapters correspond respectively to the three categories of values: self, humanity and God. What he argues is that the need for self possession, human brotherhood and cosmic rationality are sources of religious insight, i.e. they reveal God. He falls into the common error of treating salvation as achievable through the attainment only of the final values. If those three needs are for him more than final values, but also include the formal and functional values without which they have no meaning, he does not make that fact the least explicit.



Among the formal values the one which it seems to me has the greatest potency in bringing under control both the desires of the flesh and of the mind, is that of faithfulness to any relationship natural or contractual which carries with it certain expectations. That rather than love is what binds the human world together. To violate the plighted word is "to strike at the very center of life, at the spirit of the universe."

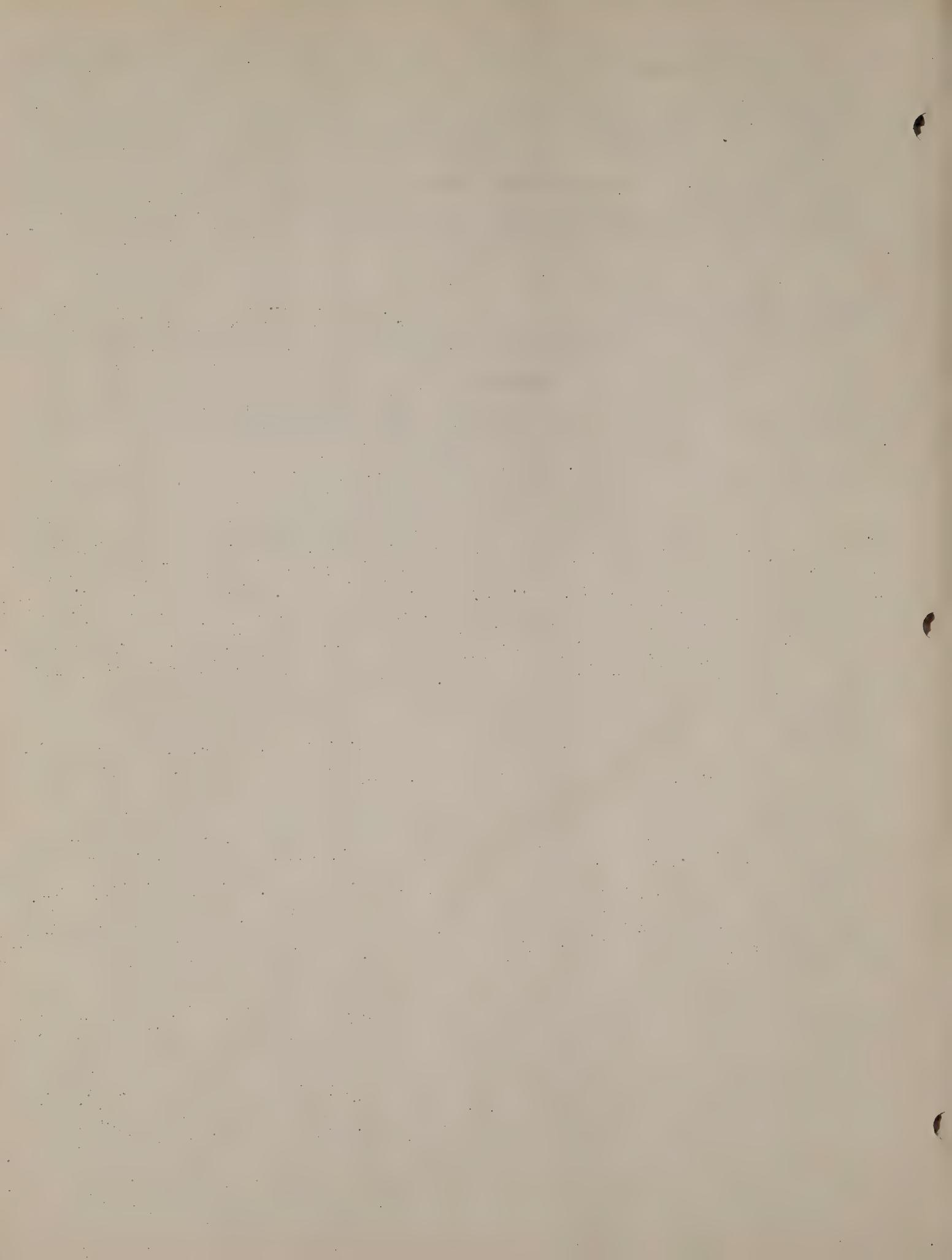
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Friday, December 26, 1941

Wednesday night the second of the special meetings of the Reconstructionist editors took place. Present were Ira, Eugene Kohn, Milton Steinberg, Abe Duker, Sam Dinin, Israel Chipkin, Jacob Golub, Theodore Lewis, Harry Essrig, Bernard Heller, Ben Zion Bokser, Bardin, Mrs. Jacob Grossman and myself.

I had intended to present Bokser's article and my reply to it which was the one drafted in this Journal (231-239) in order to make it possible for my reply to appear anonymously as the consensus of the original participants in the June conference. But when Bokser walked in I had to give up the idea of discussing his article. In the meantime I rewrote my reply completely and it will appear under my name as I had originally planned. Having subjected the first draft to several readings enabled me to formulate a much better statement than the one contained in this Journal.

The main purpose for which that special meeting had been called was to discuss further the project of organizing a Jewish Religious Fellowship. Eugene Kohn had drawn up the text of a preamble to a constitution for local chapters and of a membership pledge. Chipkin was entirely negative; Duker wanted the religious aspect omitted; Bokser wanted the purposes of Reconstructionism to be made more specific before proceeding with the organization of a fellowship; Steinberg and Ira wanted more text material for study and prayer before we proceeded. Eugene Kohn was all for it. Bardin suggested the institution of the (p243) as the occasion for regular get-togethers. I was, of course, irritated by Bokser, who I am quite sure came not to help but to obstruct and to spy. His entire physiognomy, his small pale face, his glinting eyes has taken on for me the appearance of a human rat. This impression is reinforced when I read his article in which he attacks the proposed guide for Jewish ritual usage.



I am not at all satisfied with the outcome of the meeting. That is not the way the men should have reacted, if they had felt something of the dire need of making the dormant Jewish soul. If allowed much longer to remain in its present state the Jewish soul is certain to fall into the sleep of death. My closing plea with the men was that we must discover and develop Jewish personalities among the laity. Now that we know what we want Jewish life to be like, we must get worthwhile men and women to be living embodiments of our conception of Judaism.

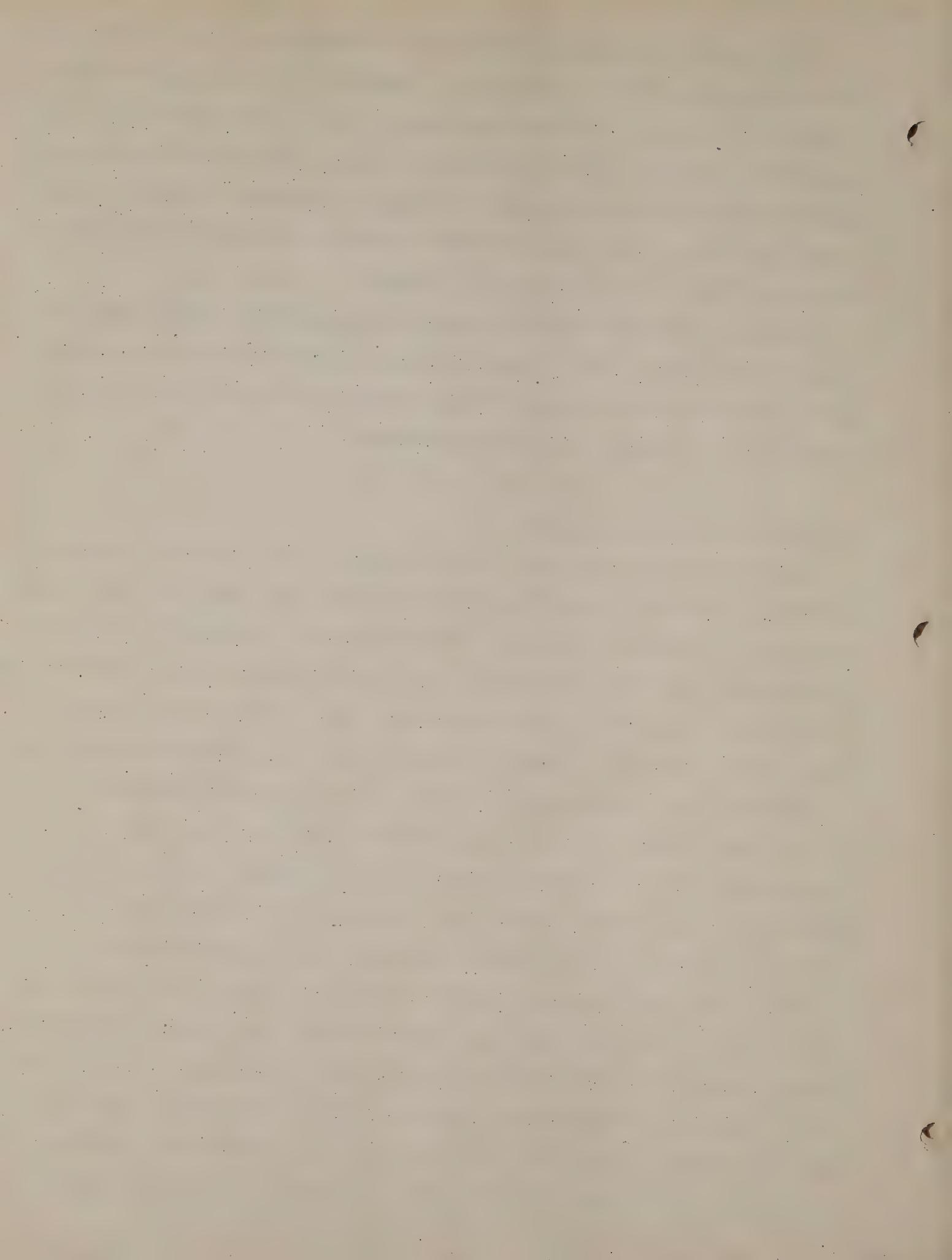
Another way of naming the final values is: self-possession, human brotherhood, godhood. To have one's faith in them reenforced, to keep on growing in the achievement of what they imply is the goal of human activity, the end for which the formal interests seek to regulate our functional interests.

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Saturday night, December 27, 1941

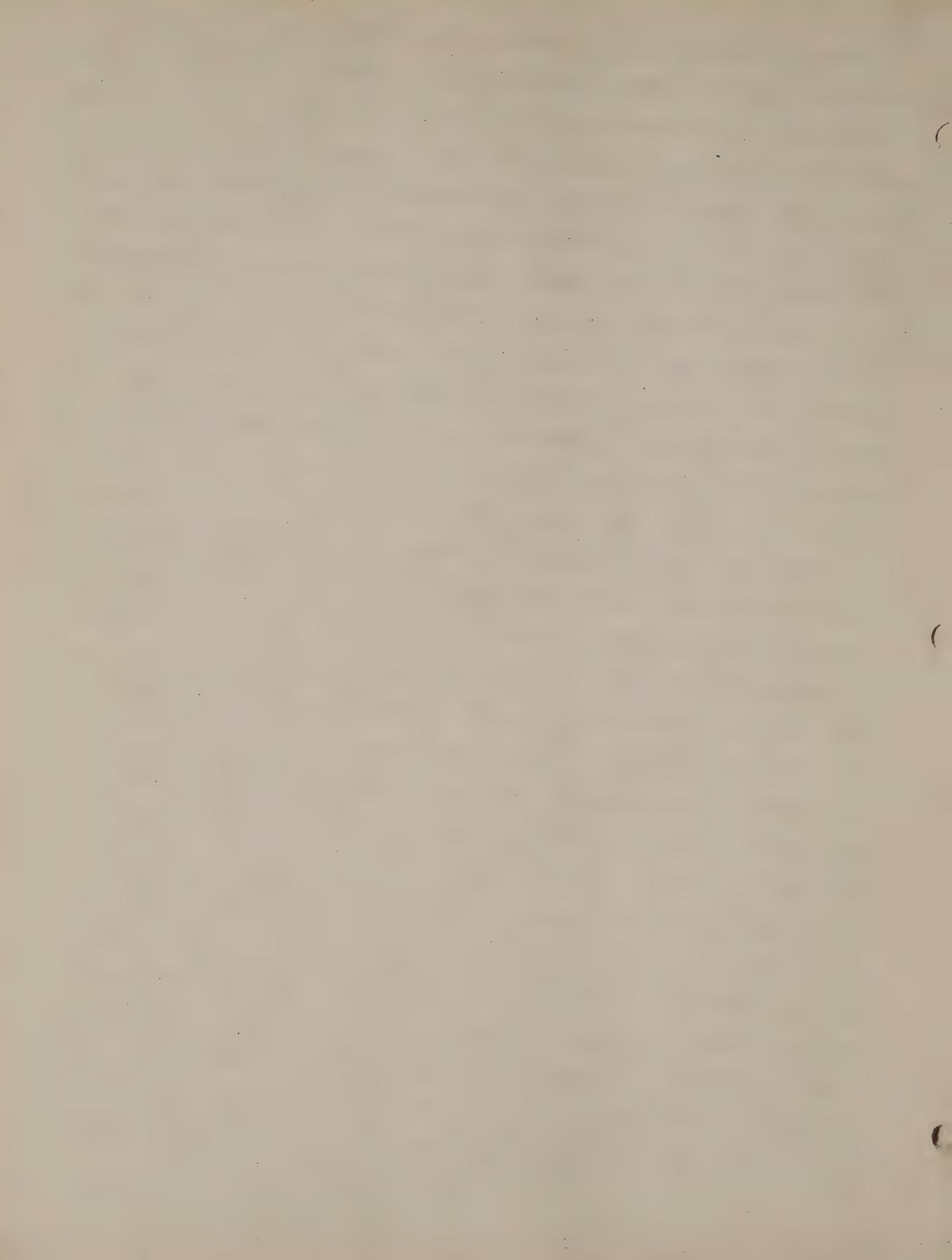
One of the facts I point out in connection with the will to live is that it is infectious. The same is true of the will to salvation. We cannot have our attention called to a fine example of endurance or heroism without being stimulated to bear up under the hardships that weigh us down or to fight on bravely against overwhelming odds. The example of Roosevelt and Churchill facing all kinds of enemies and carrying on with undaunted courage is a challenge to me personally in my desperate struggle to lay the foundation for a Jewish future in America. Yet I become discouraged most of the time. I long for rest. I yearn to be relieved of my duties. I am quite sure that if I did not have the responsibility of helping Mother and Sophie I would have asked to be retired both by the Seminary and the SAJ. Does my attitude disprove the truth of what I said before about the infectious character of endurance and courage?

The answer is that it is one thing to fight against overwhelming odds and another to fight in a losing cause. Both Roosevelt and Churchill are heading a cause which is daily gaining in strength, however great the enemy's forces and advantage of initiative may be. They have sufficient reason for being confident of the final outcome. In my case unfortunately the cause for which I am fighting is daily becoming weaker. There is not a single manifestation of Jewish life or interest anywhere on the American scene



to give me the least assurance of a halt in the process of Jewish disintegration. Wherever I look whether it be within the circle of Jewish activities or without, there is nothing but chaos, indolence, preoccupation with trivialities, perverted thinking due to vested interests, and stubborn and wilful blindness to realities. How little we can expect from our professional Jewish leaders -- I refer especially to the rabbinate -- who are presumably engaged in salvaging Jewish life may be inferred from this one fact among a thousand others, namely, that of the eighteen Jewish chaplains in the army five have had to be brought up for charges of one kind or another. The rabbinical training schools do not pay the least attention to the personal character of the men they train, and certainly do not imbue them with the need of placing the cause of Judaism above their professional success. A goodly number in the rabbinate work hard and are conscientious in the performance of their duties, but for some reason or other the problem of Jewish life as a whole is the last thing they would ever think of getting their congregants interested in. Take for example the Reconstructionist magazine. Its reading material is remarkably adopted for study and discussion of various phases of Jewish life. If the rabbis who are in sympathy with the Reconstructionist outlook would really be concerned in training a number of men and women to think constructively about Judaism, they could want no better medium. If they would avail themselves of the Reconstructionist as such a medium it would have a circulation of at least 10,000. The fact that after seven years of existence we have not been able to raise its circulation above 2000 or 2200 is an index of the futility of our efforts.

Despite my utter discouragement I keep on making all sorts of attempts to have a few people take fire in behalf of Jewish life. After being treated to the hemming and the hawing of my colleagues on the Editorial Board at my proposal to create a Jewish Religious Fellowship I felt that I ought to try out my idea on younger people. I had Moshe Davis, the president of the student body of the Seminary, come to see me yesterday and discussed with him the possibility of forming some of the rabbinical students into a chapter -- perhaps the chartered chapter -- of such a Fellowship.

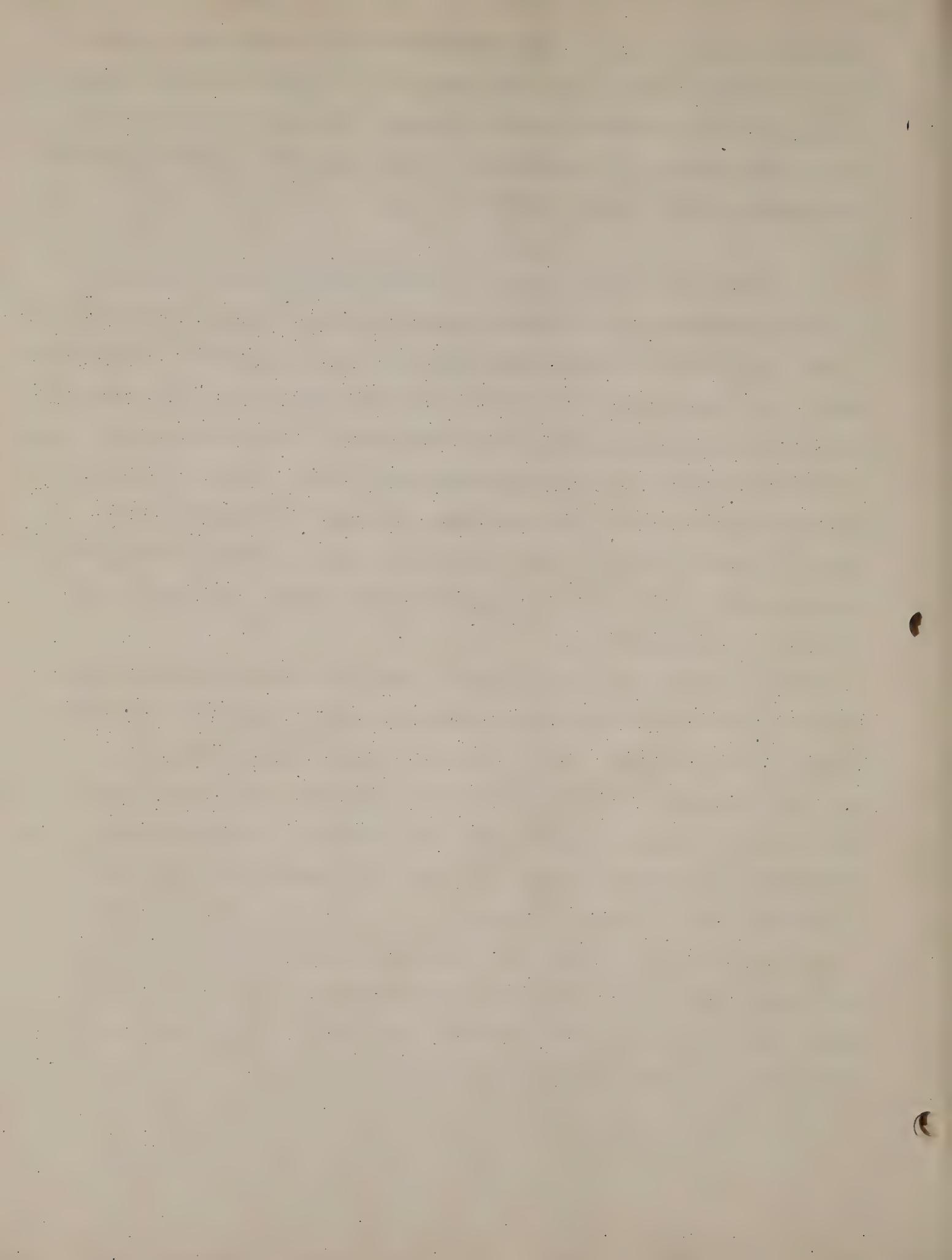


I am rather glad that he did not respond enthusiastically at first and pointed out some of the difficulties involved. That enabled me to formulate even more specifically the way in which the undertaking could be launched. He promised to let me know in about two weeks whether the organization of a Fellowship chapter consisting of about ten to fifteen students would be feasible.

The trouble with Royce's "Sources of Religious Insight" as with all attempts to make the problem of salvation subordinate to that of religion instead of vice versa, is that both salvation and religion are seen in the wrong perspective. His book would have been much more instructive if he had come to grips directly with the question what constitutes salvation and how is it to be attained. The most significant portion of the book is undoubtedly the one which discusses loyalty. Instead of trying to answer the question: why is loyalty necessary as a means to salvation? he tries to answer the question: how does loyalty reveal God? Yet there is undoubtedly much in the way he deals with the matter of loyalty that might throw a great deal of light on loyalty as a means to salvation.

Loyalty is only another term for faithfulness. By itself it is merely a formal interest. It calls for a functional interest to supply it with content and final interest to give it meaning. The functional interest necessarily pertains to the concrete needs which human beings experience in the physical, social and mental aspects of their lives. The final interests in which all loyalties are rooted are phases of human brotherhood. The synthesis of these two groups of interests figures as a cause to which the attitude of loyalty is directed.

What Royce says about loyalty to loyalty translated into the final interest of human brotherhood means that the scope of brotherhood must be coextensive with all of humanity and with all group interests in human life that do not call for the elimination of other group interests in order to survive.



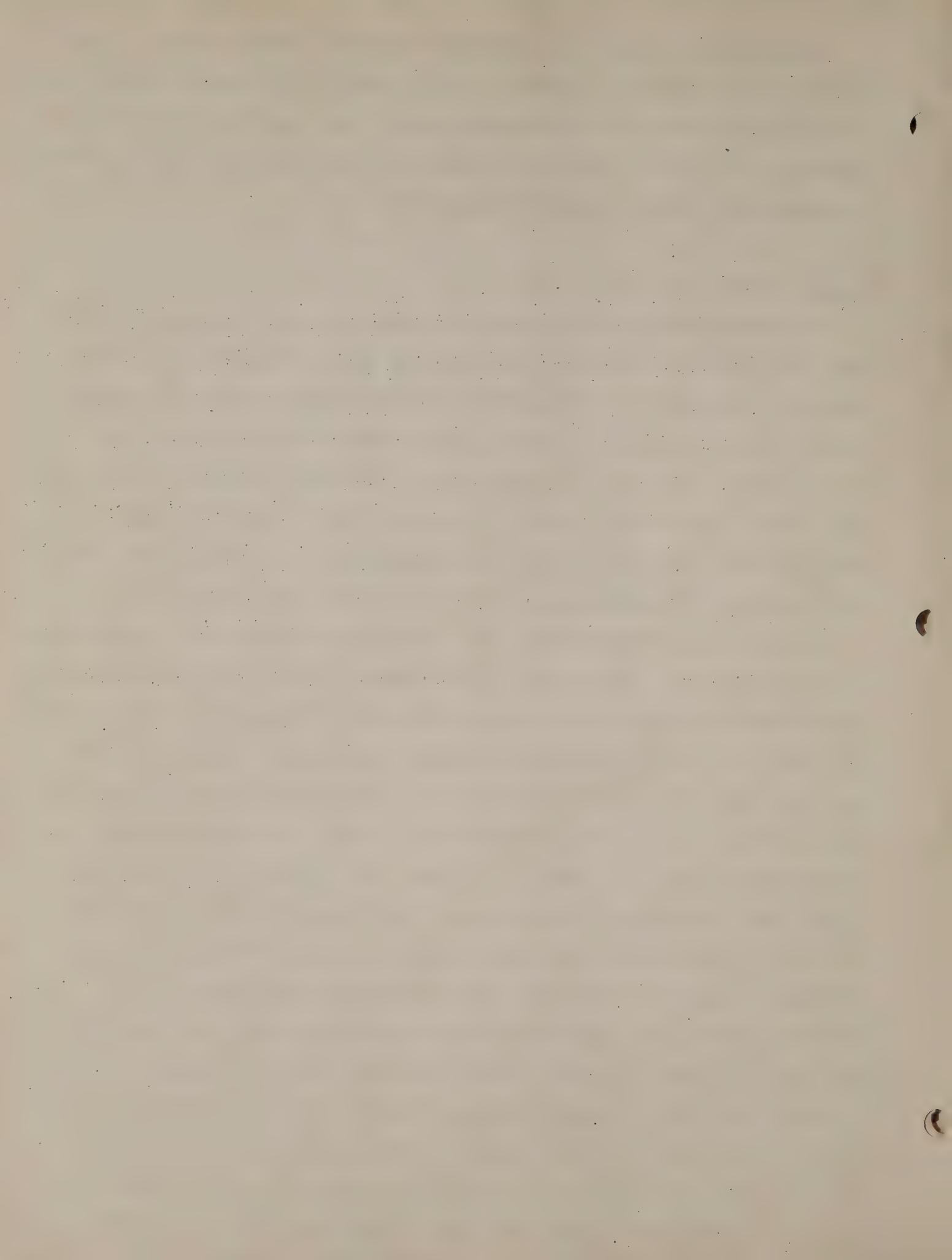
In applying the principle of loyalty as a means of salvation to any concrete situation such as loyalty to Jewish life - the questions to be answered are: 1) Is the loyalty related to a genuine functional need of the human beings involved in the cause, and 2) Is the loyalty to the cause so interpreted as not to be prejudicial to loyalty as a universal principle of human life?

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Sunday, December 28, 1941

It seems to me that soterics promises to give us a truer comprehension of the relation of the law of justice to the law of love than anything that has thus far been said on the subject. All we have to do is merely to recognize that the law of justice belongs to the formal interests whereas the law of love belongs to the final interests. The particular area to which it belongs is the goal of human brotherhood. In the light of this relation of the law of love to the law of justice all the finely spun out arguments about the one superseding the other or rendering the other unnecessary or ~~supplementary~~ supplementing each other is entirely beside the point

In the field of formal interests the most important consideration is that urged constantly by Reinhold Niebuhr viz: "It is necessary to insist that the moral achievement of individual good will is not a substitute for the mechanisms of social control. It may perfect and purify, but it cannot create basic justice. Basic justice in any society depends upon the right organization of men's labor, the equalization of their social power, regulation of their common interests and adequate restraint upon the inevitable conflict of competing interests. The health of a social organism depends upon the adequacy of its social structure as much as does the health of a body upon the biochemical processes. No degree of good will alone can cure a deficiency in glandular secretions; and no moral idealism can overcome a basic mechanical defect in the social structure." (An Interpretation of Christian Ethics pp. 181-2) The foregoing implies that it is misrepresenting the formal need for justice to say that all it asks for is that each one experience a due sense of what is fair in his dealings with his fellows. The fact is that in the very will to salvation or to make the most of human life is the inherent demand as must for the very mechanisms and agencies of social control as for the element of good will as

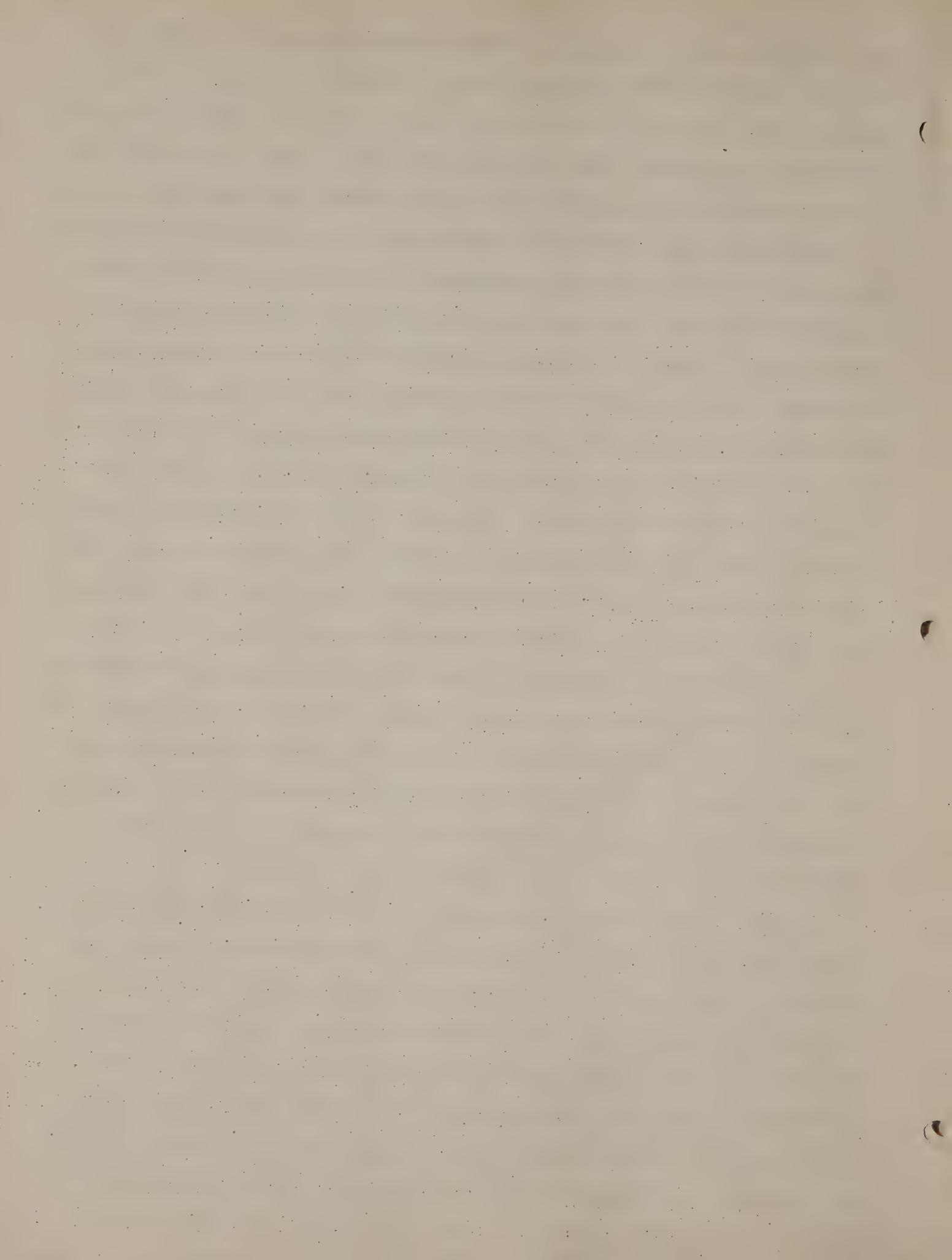


each individual. Insofar as man is a political animal he yearns for institutions and laws which regulate the life of society as for the spirit of justice which in each individual human being. No better proof of this inherent yearning than the fact that man has always valued those institutions and laws so highly and regarded them as so indispensable to his existence as to ascribe them to some superhuman source.

Unfortunately this ascription of divine origin to the mechanisms of social control which should have merely served as a reminder of their great importance has been stretched to imply that those mechanisms are unalterable. Those who have had a vested interest in maintaining those mechanisms in their status quo, when changes in economic conditions necessitated their revision or reconstruction, are largely responsible for encouraging the notion that mechanisms and agencies of social control are of secondary importance from the standpoint of justice; the main thing is the element of individual good will. The aspect of divinity in such agencies must again be stressed, this time consciously to point out not origin but purpose, and therefore not as a sanction for the status quo but to approximate those agencies to such justice as is called for by the new conditions which have come into being.

The inherent need for agencies of social control applies to all human relations. to those of love no less than to those of interest. The family, the community, the nation and the league of nations cannot be governed by voluntary exercise of good will. There must be laws. Laws involve sanctions and sanctions call for mechanisms of social control. The League of Nations was a fiasco from the moment that the clause of the constitution dealing with sanctions was eliminated.

The error of social radicalism consists in being so preoccupied with the formal needs expressed in the yearning for social mechanisms, agencies etc. which would incorporate the will to justice that it overlooks the part played by the final interests. The latter interest function in the attachment to national sentiment, to historic tradition, to cultural inheritances and in general in all unconscious loyalties. So strong is the need for human brotherhood as a goal to render life worthwhile that it figures as the objective of our various loyalties. To be sure in so figuring its scope is permitted to shrink to the dimensions of one's family, one's community or at best one's nation. But to overlook that need is to miscalculate



woefully any attempt to further human salvation.

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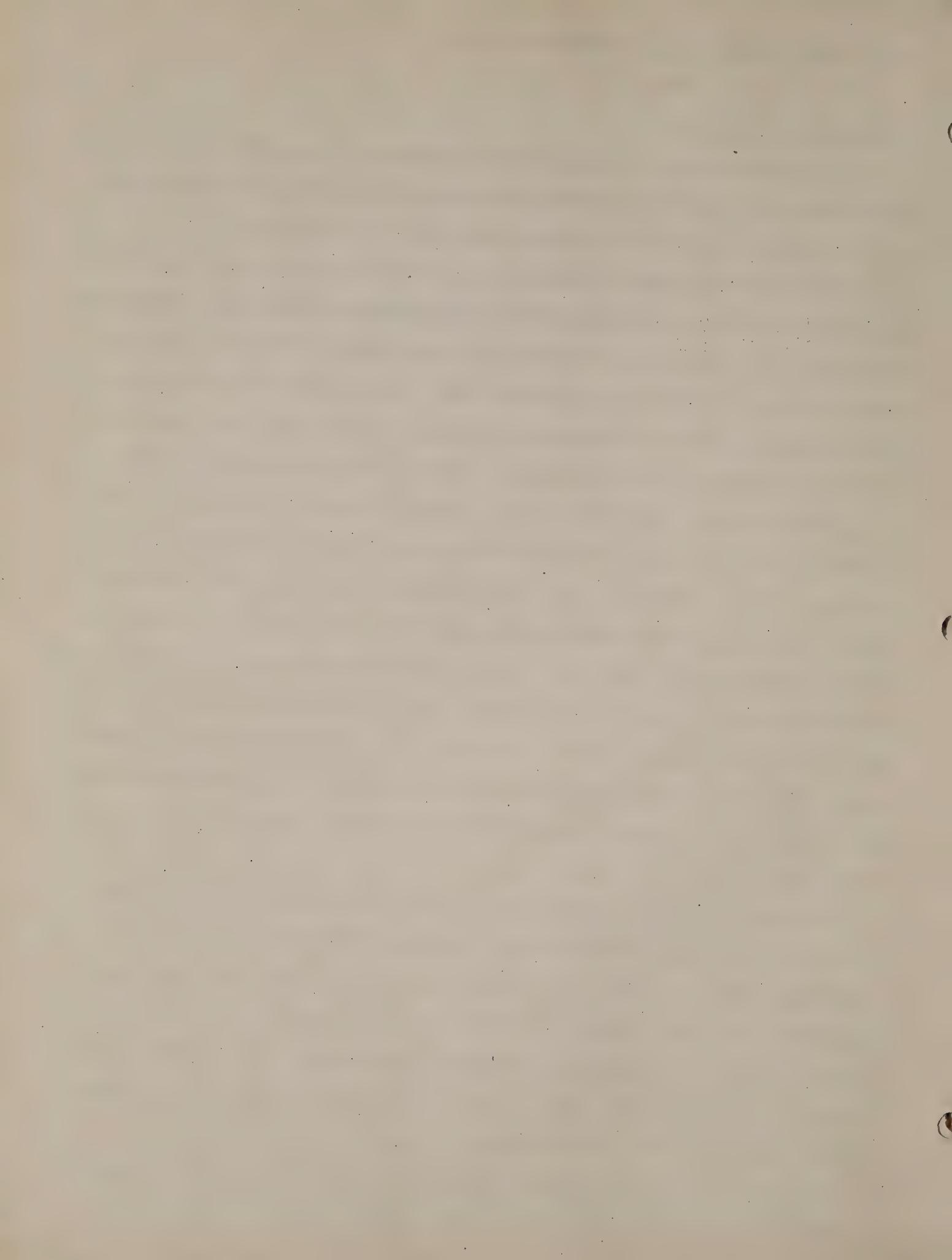
Monday, December 29, 1941

The will to salvation involves the total personality of the human being. In fact we first begin to understand what the total personality consists of when we reckon with all of the four factors (or causes) that contribute to salvation.

Behind the goal of human brotherhood is the entire complex of facts and relationships which indicate the dependence of the individual on the successful organization and operation of social forces. The ability of the soldier to withstand the natural tendency to run away from danger is due not merely to the exercise of will power which is generated solely within his physical organism. It is much more the result of the tradition established by the long history of war and of the effective organization and morale of the army to which he belongs. When the soldier displays such ability he does so however not only as the effect of the traditions and the army's influence over him, but also in order to uphold that tradition and for the sake of the army's honor. In the same way whatever the individual does that runs counter to his biological drives because of the inner compulsion which emanates from the tradition with which he is identified and the group which is held together by that tradition, he does for the sake of both tradition and group. But a tradition which holds together a group and a group that knows itself such by virtues of a tradition are fragmentary manifestations of that human brotherhood for the sake of which we live when we live at our best.

The will to salvation cannot achieve its objective merely by taking thought. No mere deliberate desire to exercise will can strengthen one's will. "What men are able to will depends not upon the strength of their willing, but upon the strength which enters their will and over which their will has little control," says R. Niebuhr (l.c. 217) The problem of salvation is, accordingly, so to cooperate with our social environment as to have it provide us with the strength which is stronger than our own individual vacillating wills.

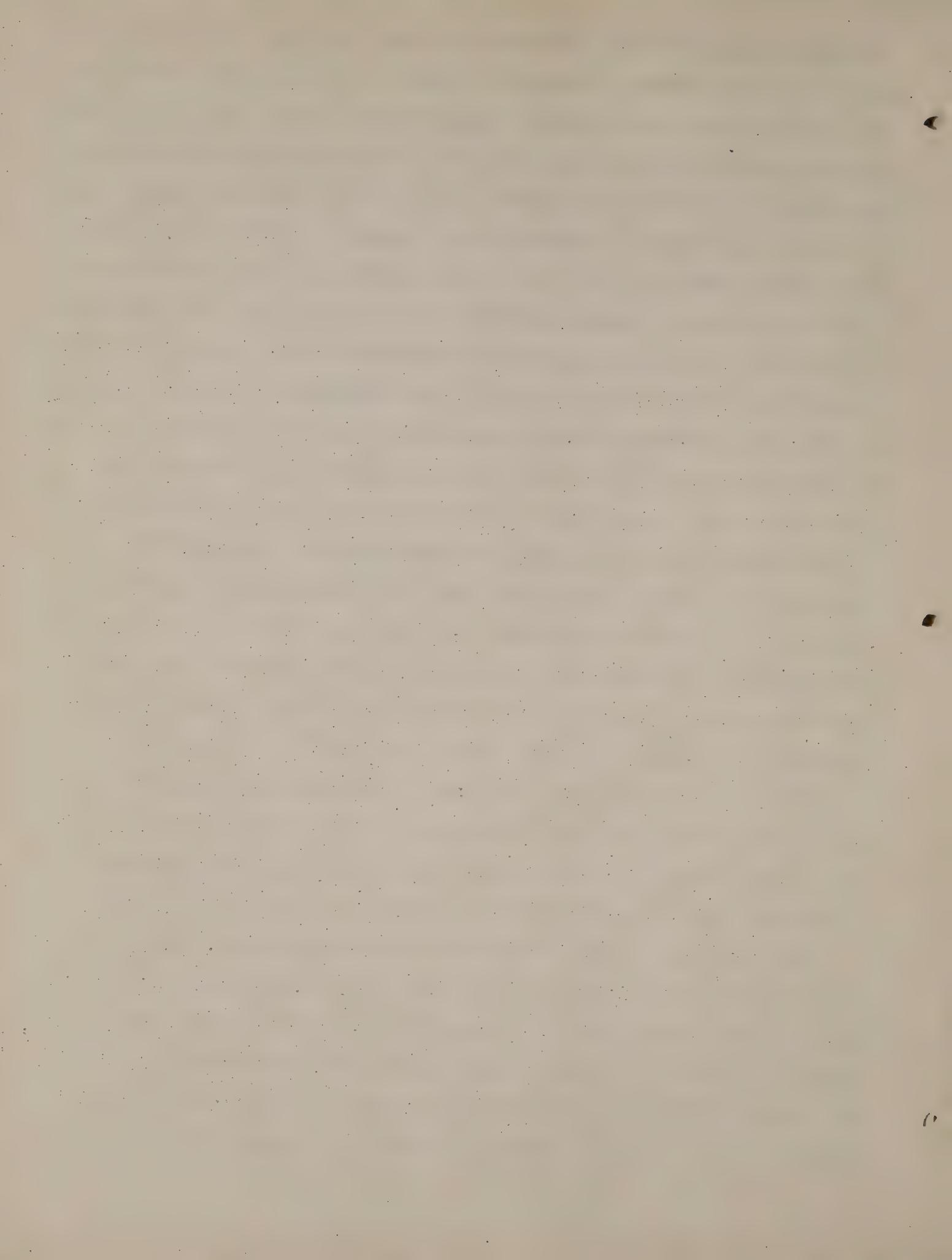
"Whether a man stands or yields in the hour of crisis is of course determined by commitments made before the crisis arises." (ibid.) If this is true we should



not permit ourselves to remain footloose, but enter into covenants and relationships which will in time of crisis give us the strength to do what we could not do if we were thrown entirely upon the inherent strength of our own individual wills. Those moral and religious anarchists who dread making commitments because they maintain that pledges are made only to be broken fall to reckon with the overpowering strength of the biological impulses. Granted even that pledges are broken, but they are not broken without causing a trauma. The healing of that trauma only adds to the appreciation of the need for keeping the pledges. In the sense of sin and repentance the individual keenly realizes his dependence upon society for the integrity and salvation of his personality and is thus sensitized to the significance of human brotherhood.

The moral or ~~religious~~ religious anarchist who claims to possess such will power as to be independent of any strength from without cannot place a high value upon human brotherhood. This describes the attitude of a Nietzsche. He was himself no flouter of high ideals. "No complete moral nihilism is of course possible. Some recognition of the principle of law and order is inevitable even in the most consistent vitalism. In Nietzsche this is done in minimal terms by the insistence that the will to power of his superman will create aristocratic societies of higher worth than the rationalized societies in which the morality of "herd animals" has gained ascendancy." (R. Niebuhr, "The Nature and Destiny of Man" p. 34) What objective ground is there for regarding the individual as more normal than the herd? He had a morality and religion of his own. They were based on the assumption that a human being, to be distinctively human, ought to depend upon his own inner strength. But by the same token he renounced the ideal of human brotherhood.

This, incidentally, makes clear why the fascist and nazi ~~had~~ utilization of Nietzsche as one of their patron saints is based on a falsification of his philosophy. Any totalitarian system is at the very opposite pole of Nietzsche's anarchism. Mussolini justified Fascism on the ground that men were "tired of liberty" and the youth of today "desire order, hierarchy and discipline." Unfortunately there is sufficient truth in Mussolini's assertion to render Fascism plausible and alluring.



The truth is that men look for strength from without to fortify their will to salvation, to protect them against themselves as well as against outward enemies. It is this fact which democracy has overlooked, and in overlooking it has had to yield to totalitarian systems of life.

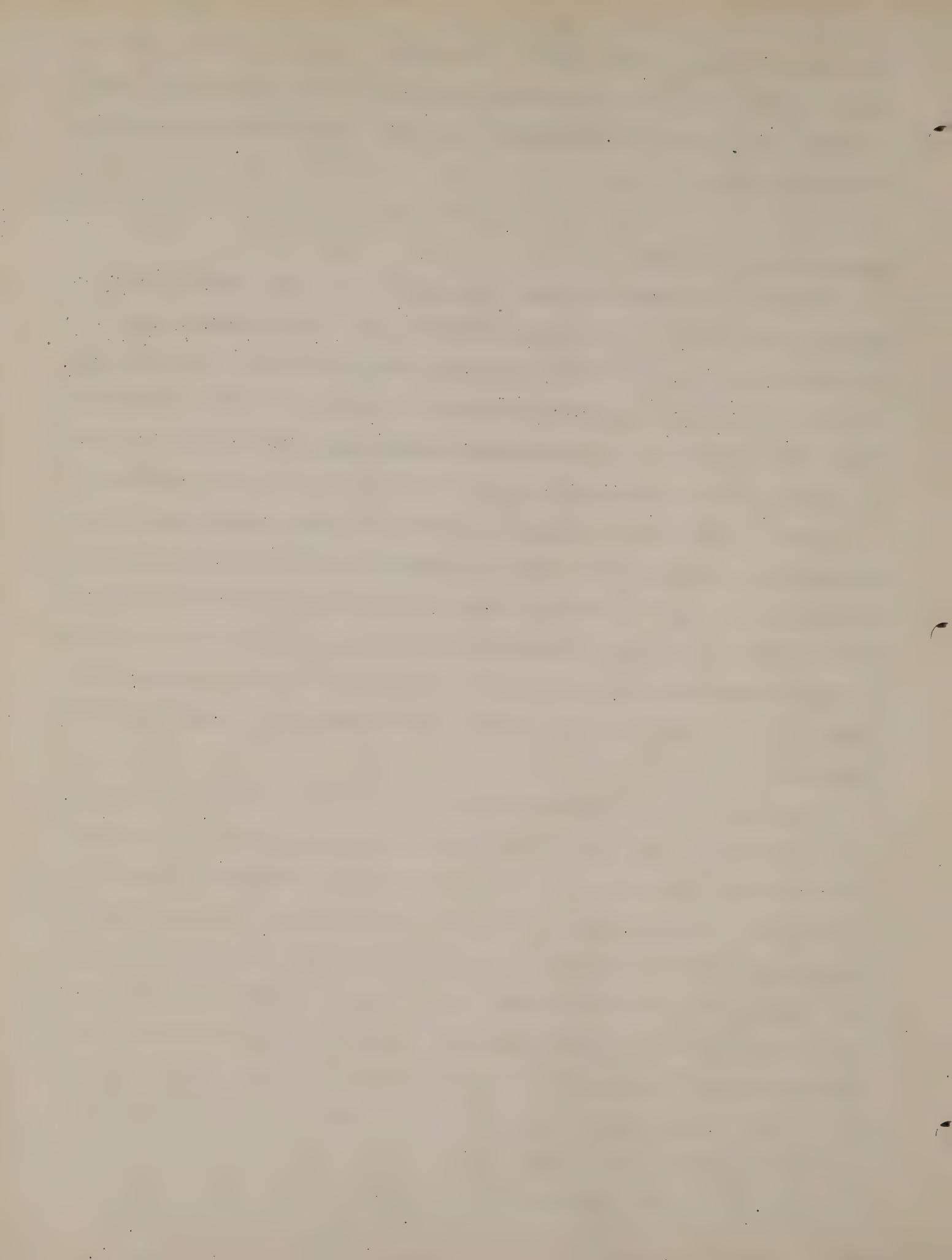
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Tuesday, December 30, 1941

Schechter's designation of Higher Criticism as "Higher anti-Semitism" has not done the cause of Jewish biblical scholarship any good. It has proved to be a stumbling block in the way of honest research and frank discussion of the problems raised by a scientific and historical approach to the Bible. It belongs to the same class of cheap and dangerous wit as William Jenning Bryans famous crack at the theory of evolution: "I am more interested in the rock of ages than in the age of rocks."

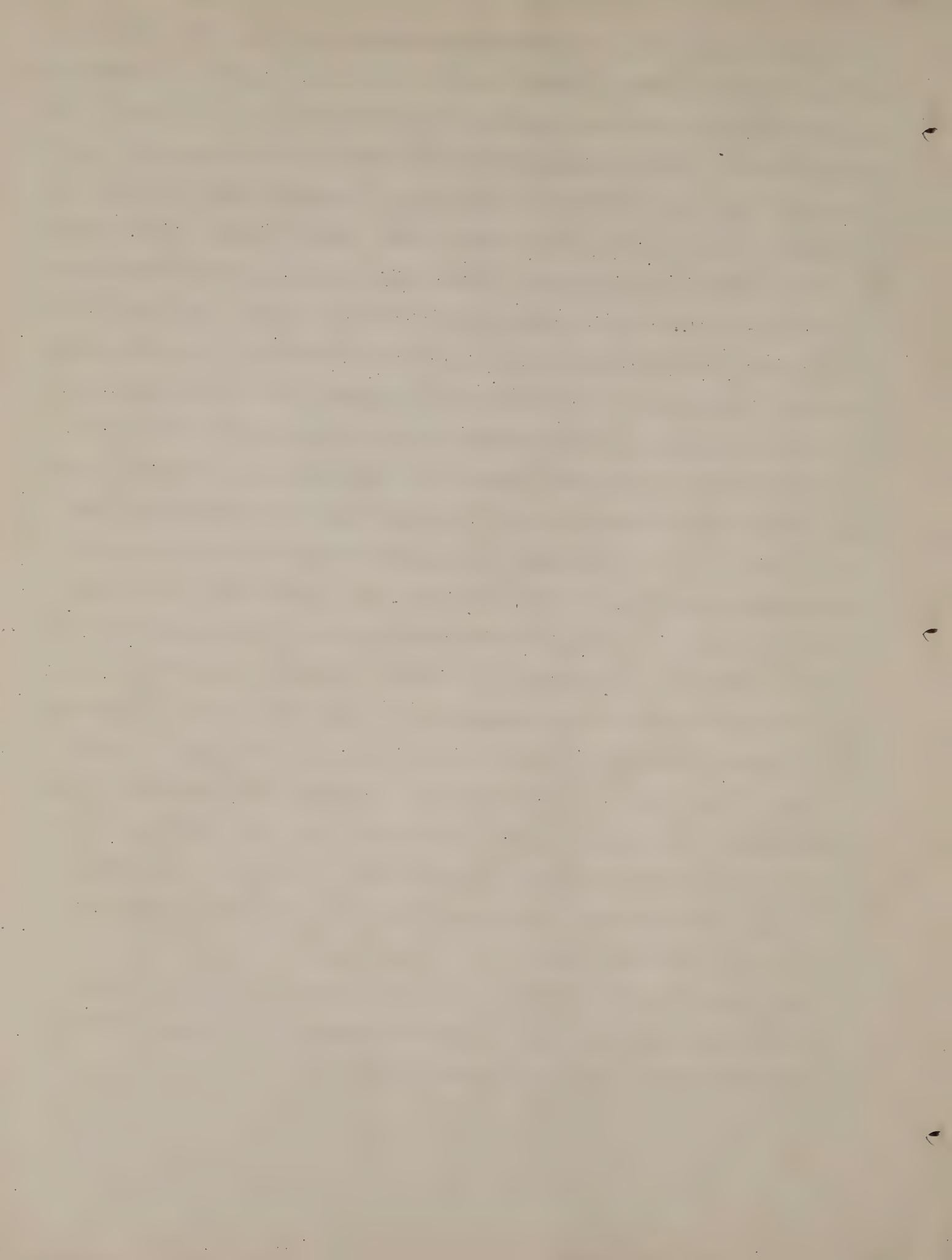
Exactly the same kind of argument was advanced by Bryan against evolution as is advanced by the fundamentalists against the scientific approach to the Bible. He too maintained "that evolution was not a theory but a hypothesis; that since the evolutionists could not agree among themselves on the origin of species, since important changes had been made since Darwin first promulgated his findings, evolution was, therefore, an incoherent mass of conjecture and guesswork with neither a scientific nor factual base."

If Soterics is ever to deserve the name of a normative science it should be able to bring within its perspective the entire range of creatures that call themselves human and evaluate each of them by some comparative standard. Take e.g. two such entirely dissimilar characters like Clarence Darrow and Byron (both of whose abridged biographies I have read in Omnibook of Dec. 1941). Darrow was a normal human being who lived a long and useful life. He was a true warrior knight if ever there was one. He was a zealous defender of the weak against the strong, of the persecuted against the persecutor. The more helpless the persecuted the more powerful the persecutor, the greater Darrow's zeal. He was a lover of the truth and an ardent hater of ignorance and superstition. With his deep insight into human nature he could not condemn the McNamorarras because they had worked for the cause of labor



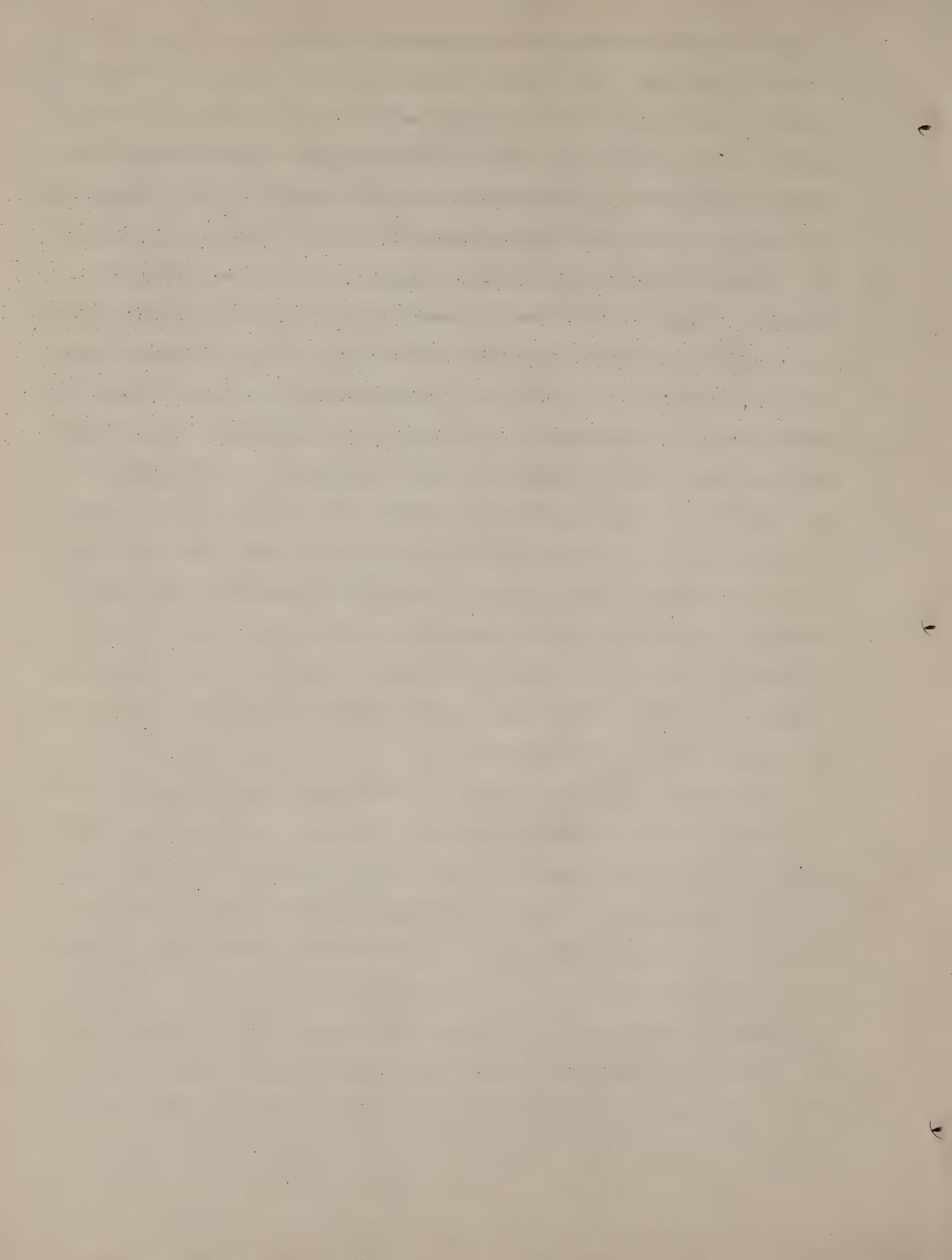
and not for personal profit. But he could not condone selfishness and intolerance and fought them with all the resources at his command. That he belongs to those "whom the forgotten never forget" (an expression Rabbi Goldenson used in his prayer at the funeral of Sol M. Stroock) is attested by the following: "At all hours of the day and night people filed past to say their farewells: workingmen from the stock yards and steel mills in their overalls; scrub women in their Mother Hubbards; colored men with their lunch baskets under their arms; colored women with groups of wide-eyed little children who had been brought to see the white man who fought for their race; the cold and frightened one who had gone to him to warm their hands at his fire; the weak and confused and indeterminate ones who had been strengthened by his boldness and resolution; the harassed, the unhappy, the mentally ill, whose plight he had tried to make intelligible; teachers whose freedom he had broadened by his struggles; students whose minds had been stimulated by his iconoclasm; lawyers to whose trade he had given another dimension; clergymen to whom he had revealed Christianity at work; those who came from no specific class or section; the indescribable ones who had spilled out their grief to him and whose worries had been lightened by his sympathy; the misfits whom he had defended and for whom he had pleaded in a harsh and cruel world; the labor leaders and union members whose organizations he had preserved under fire; the liberals for whose middle of the road navigation he had fought increasingly for half a century; the radical for whose freedom of thought and speech he had endured the spleen of reaction; the long line of men accused of crime for whom he had earned another chance; those who had killed and who lived now only because this dead man had lived; the middle class folk for whom he had been a rallying point, a debunker, an intellectual spark."

"The masks of battle are all over his face," wrote H. L. Mencken. "He has been through more wars than a whole regiment of Pershings. And most of them have been struggles to the death, without codes or quarter."



Men of the Darrow type are unfortunately too few to make a dent on the kind of a world we live in. To realize what kind of a world it is one has but to note the vast array of evil forces with which Darrow tried to grapple. To take as an example only one aspect of it, the religious with which I have first hand familiarity, the biographer has this interesting fact to record: In his old age Darrow went around the country with three representatives of religion, a Jew, a Catholic and a Protestant, debating the subject of religion. He was the protagonist of agnosticism. I dare say that from the standpoint of religion at its best there was more and higher religion in his agnosticism than in the kind of religion which was represented by its official defenders. He was eager to bring about a mutual understanding among the representatives of the different religions, by having them become acquainted with one another's religion. "Yet," says his biographer, "of the four men on the platform in each of the cities, the only one who was received with suspicion, fear and dislike was the agnostic among them. Eighty per cent of the audiences hated Darrow's point of view reports Whitehead." (his lecture managers). This figure tells the whole story of what anyone must put with who challenges the imbecilities and hypocrisies which beset the cause of sincere and intelligent religion. Certainly no smaller is the percentage of the evil forces which dominate the rest of human life.

Let us take a look now at Byron. I am not in the least interested in passing judgment on his wallowing insensuality. His poetic gifts apart, he strikes me as a human bull much sought after by lady cows. That all such people can afford to play dalliance at lowe without having to do a stitch of honest work indicates how far parasitism is still an accepted part of social life. There is nothing in his personal life that can serve as a stimulus nor in his thinking that can serve as a guide to the striving for salvation. Yet I suppose there must be something in the very frustration of his personal life that can throw light on the problem of soterics as a whole. Just what it is I cannot at this moment say.

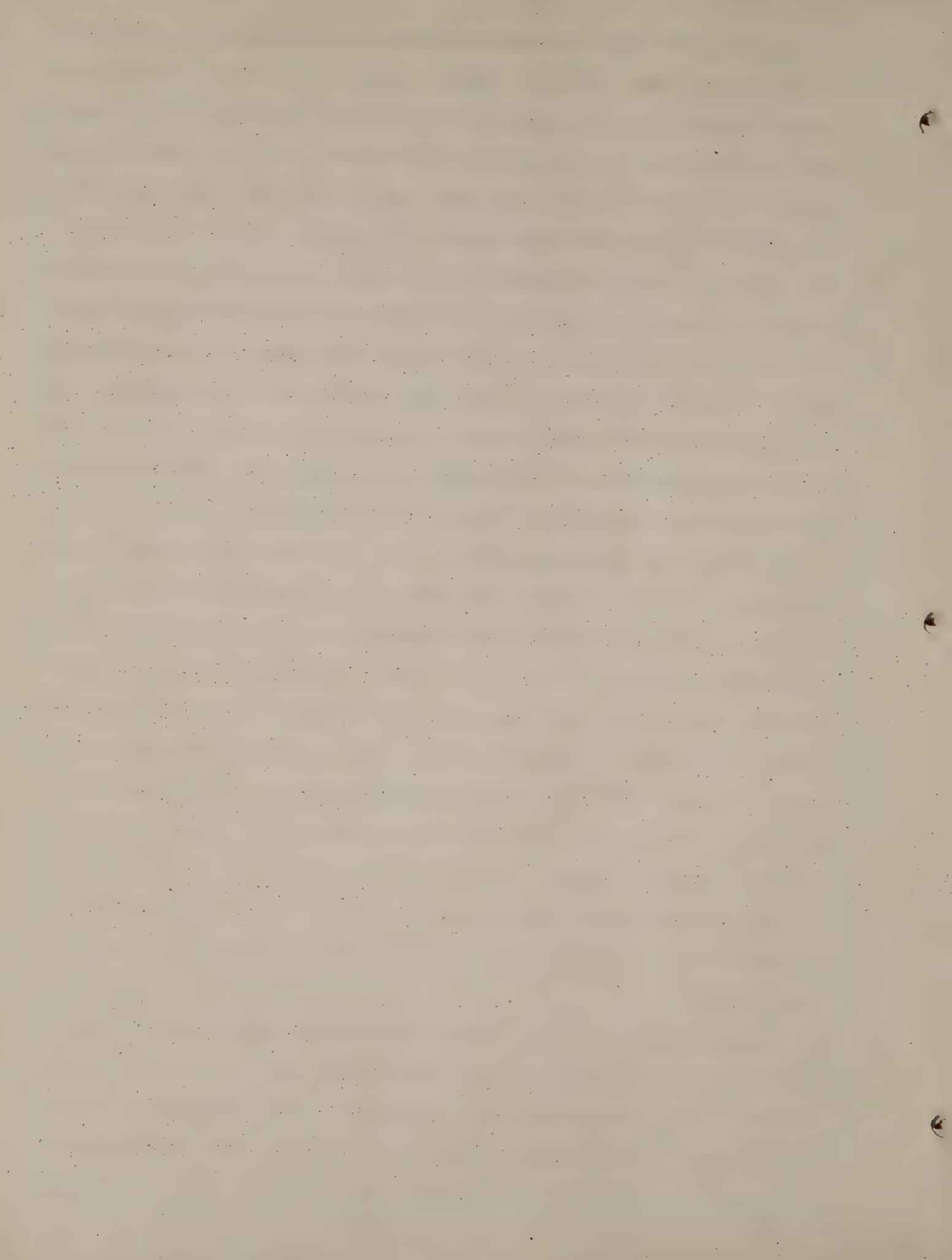


A consideration that would naturally have to enter in applying a soterical standard to a person's life would naturally have to be the person's own estimate of his life, ~~but~~ not that it would be the only determining factor, but it certainly cannot be overlooked. From the subjective standpoint, it can be conjectured with a great deal of certainty that Byron was a far less happy man than Darrow, and that despite the great fame and influence of his poetry. This can be seen from what Shelley said about him when the two were together in Italy: "He is heartily and deeply discontented with himself; and contemplating in the distorted mirror of his own thoughts the nature and the habits of man, what can he behold but objects of contempt and despair?" Byron was evidently quite a misanthrope. Darrow it seems, must have been quite a lover of mankind. The mere fact that his experience with the McMamara case did not embitter him against the workers' organizations is sufficient testimony to his love for his fellow men.

In the light of soterical analysis of the final interests, a misanthrope is one who cannot set up humanity or the brotherhood of mankind as a goal to live for. By the same token that he hates mankind he hates himself, and therefore must also lack any personality -- goal to live for. As for God or a rational cosmos, that is out of question. This means that subjectively, a person like Byron achieves nothing but perdition in this life. On the other hand, Darrow must have felt, despite occasional lapses into states of mental depression, that he was living for purposes that made his life worthwhile to himself and to others. Subjectively he surely achieved salvation.

Thus soterics can help us considerably in identifying the kind of a life which subjectively at least is more likely to achieve salvation, and which end in perdition.

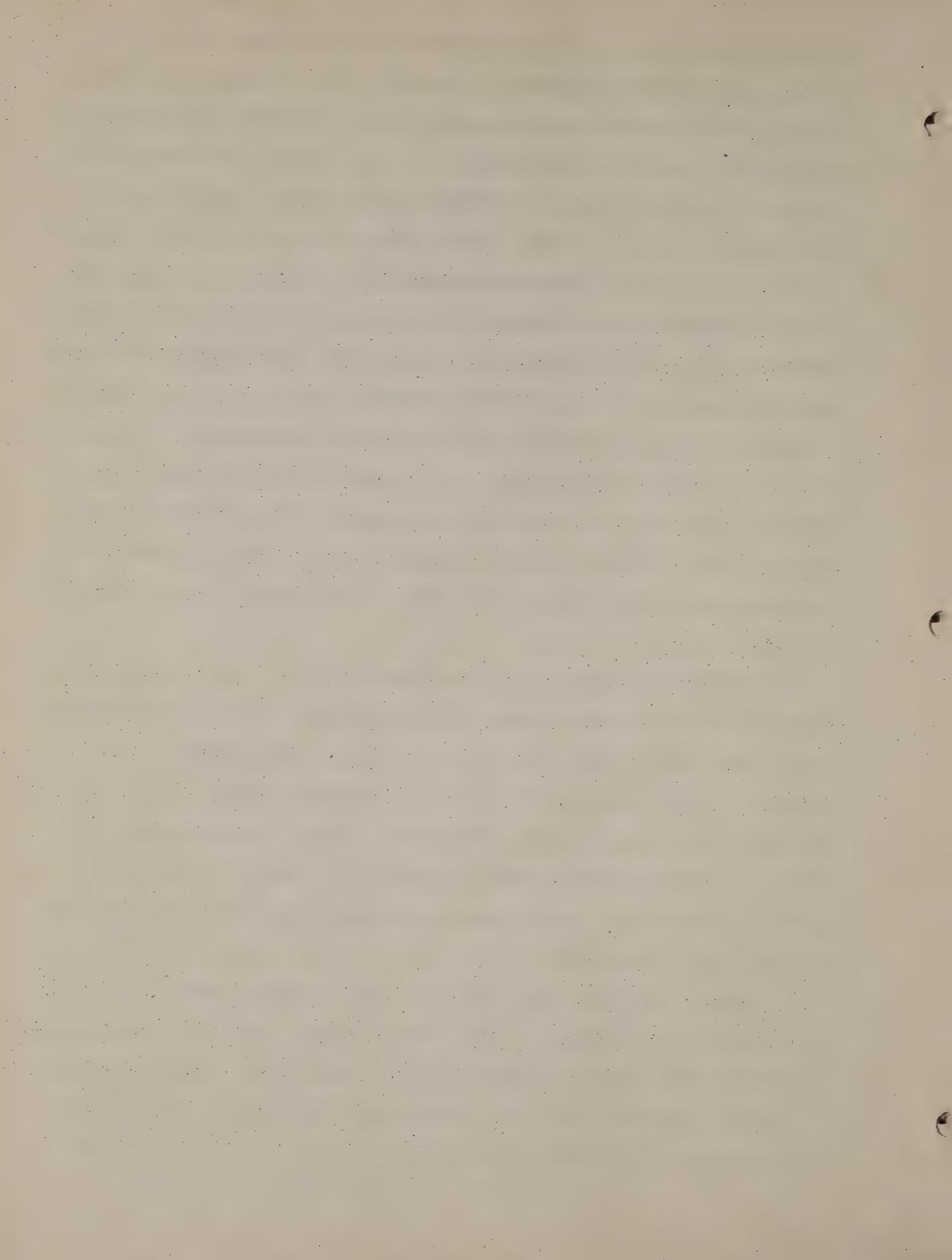
But the more important and more difficult criterion which soterics should be in a position to establish is the objective one. That is to say, soterics ought to help us answer the question: which type of person should be regarded as contributing more to the salvation of mankind, to its growth and to the progressive fulfillment of its creative potentialities, Byron or Darrow? In rewarding Byron



with far greater and more lasting fame men seem to favor Byron. Is that a true inference, and if a true inference is the reward just or helpful? If we were to say that the reward is not for the way Byron lived but for the way he poetized, under utopian conditions the distinction would give rise to what seems strange practice of forgetting the man and perhaps even his name and celebrating his poetry. What do we know of Homer, the Psalmists or the author of Job? Why not institute the practice of forgetting the dead lion's carcass and enjoying only the honey? The only value of knowing that Byron lived the kind of life he did would be that it would furnish material for the better understanding of morbid or pathological aspects of human character. Whatever else soterics may accomplish, it certainly can furnish the key to many an enigmatic philosophy of religion, whether traditional or mystic as well as a criterion by which to judge the completeness or significance of any modern philosophy of life. This time I shall make use of the soterical analysis to render R. Niebuhr's opening chapter of his "The Nature and Destiny of Man" not only more understandable, but more successful in proving its point.

The chapter is called "Man as a Problem to Himself." After pointing out the paradoxes inherent in man's conception of himself and of his place in the universe Niebuhr finds that they are due to the fact that man views himself in twofold fashion: as a child of nature and as spirit transcending nature. The rationalists recognize such transcendence in man's rational capacity. But the degree of his transcendence is much greater than that connoted in "reason" for man has the further ability to stand outside himself, even outside reason, as when he submits to inquiry the affirmations of reason.

In terms of the soterical analysis into four factors or causes of salvation the foregoing means that man functions not only in the functional interests (nature or world) and the rational or formal interests (reason), but also in the final or purposive interests. The values, Personality, Humanity, God represent man's self transcendence or ability to make himself the object of his consciousness.

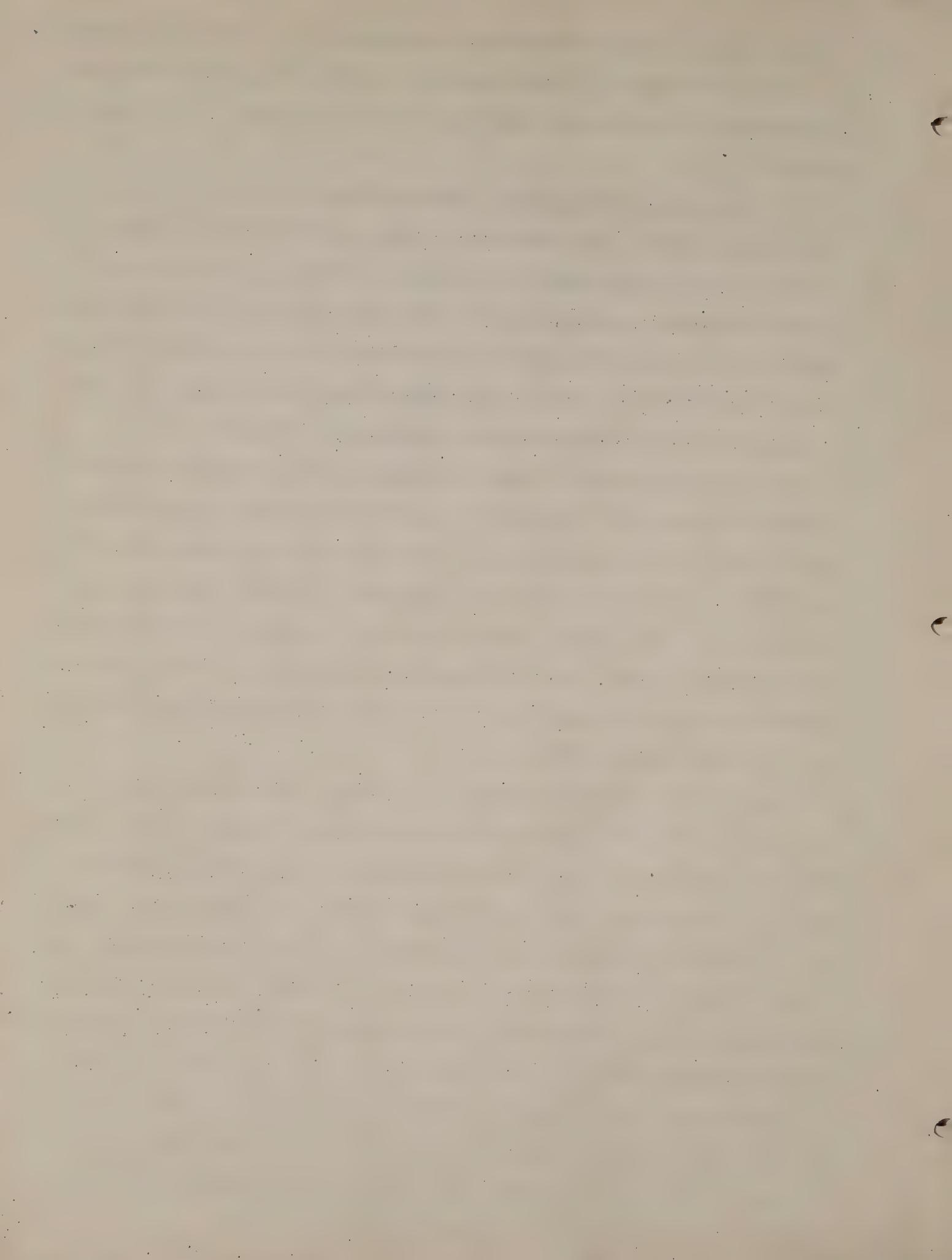


Idealistic philosophies stress man's uniqueness by identifying man "prematurely" with his ability to think in terms of purpose. Naturalistic philosophies obscure his uniqueness by stressing his inability to emancipate himself from his functional interests.

II. The Classical View of Man. Both according to Plato and to Aristotle man is a body-mind dualism. For Aristotle the "mind" in that dualism is passive in contrast to "active vous (mind). In Stoicism the relation of mind or reason to nature is not always consistent; at times it is the antithesis of nature (as in impulse) and at times it is regarded as synonymous with nature or God (pantheism). The Greek dramatists represent the principle of order whose protagonist is Zeus ~~xx~~ as Being defied by the vitalities whose protagonist is Dionysus.

Translated into soterical terms, the classical view of man compares him to a battlefield wherever the functional and the rational interests contend with each other. According to Aristotle the immortal principle is other than the reason which is hyphenated with or involved in the body. The "active mind" belongs to the category of final values. According to Plato the formal values themselves are the external ideals. The Greek dramatists with a sense for life's realities appreciate the creative element in the functional interests, but also their tendency to disrupt measure, law reason.

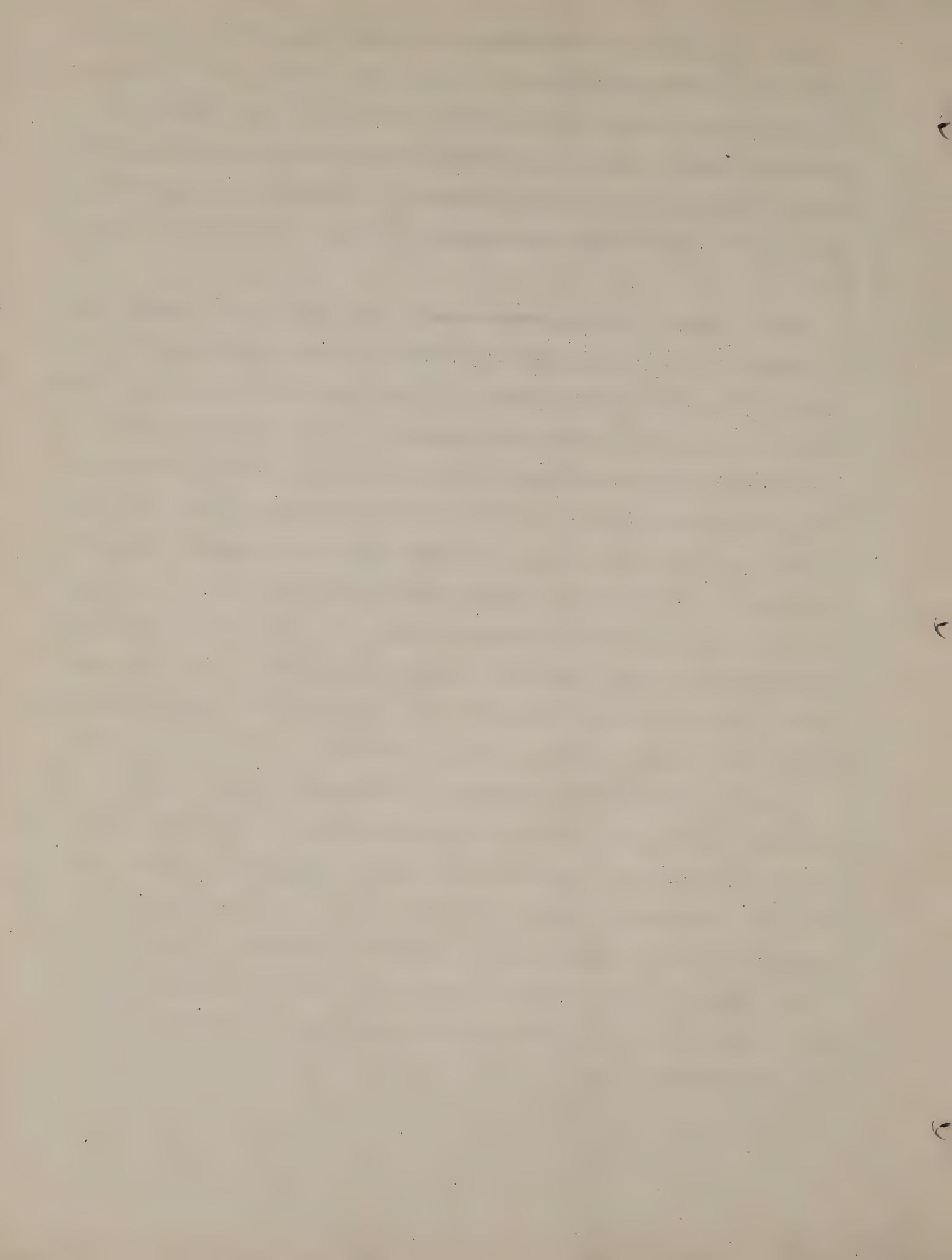
III. The Christian View of Man. "The Christian faith in God," says N. "as creator of the world transcends the canons and autonomies of rationality, particularly the autonomy between mind and matter, between consciousness and extension." I confess that without the soterical analysis this statement of N. would be to me completely meaningless. This, however, is what it means to me in terms of that analysis: The faith in God as creator of the world introduces a new category into our understanding of man, viz the category of purpose. To realize the connection between the conception of God as creator and the category of purpose it is necessary to realize that for ancient man the discovery of what he regarded as purpose was so overwhelming that he personified the purpose and ascribed to it not only the factor of initiative but also the factor of creativity. In fact even we moderns are wont to identify initiative with creativity.



The final values, of which godhood is the most representative, cannot be identified with either the functional or the formal. Insofar as it is in those final values rather than in the functional or rational that we discover the uniqueness of man, there can be no inherent contradiction between the two latter. This conclusion is in accord with the biblical conception of the unity of body and soul; the soul corresponding to the rational principle in the Greek conception of man.

What N. speaks of as "the homelessness of the human spirit" refers to the fact that man stands outside both the necessity of nature and the laws of rationality in that he can contemplate them, i.e. view them from without. This constitutes his freedom, which alone gives meaning to his life. But what else is this freedom and its concomitant transcendence of nature and rationality if not the domain of purposive values? It is from that standpoint that he must see himself to understand himself as man. "To understand himself truly" says N., "means to begin with a faith that he is understood from beyond himself, that he is known and loved of God and must find himself in terms of obedience to the divine will." This means that man cannot understand himself truly unless he reckon with those values of purpose which man must follow, i.e. obey, in order to achieve salvation. Following those values constitutes obeying God's will.

But the same Christian faith that sees man's essence in his relation to God sees man's inherent failure in the fact that man "refuses to admit his creatureliness." In the soterical analysis the purposive values are personality, humanity, God. They are interdependent, but not coordinate. God is creator, personality is creature, humanity is mediator between creator and creature. Whenever the individual forgets his role as creature, and humanity (or its representative, the clan, tribe, or nation) its role as intermediary, they set themselves up as God. That is the cardinal sin.

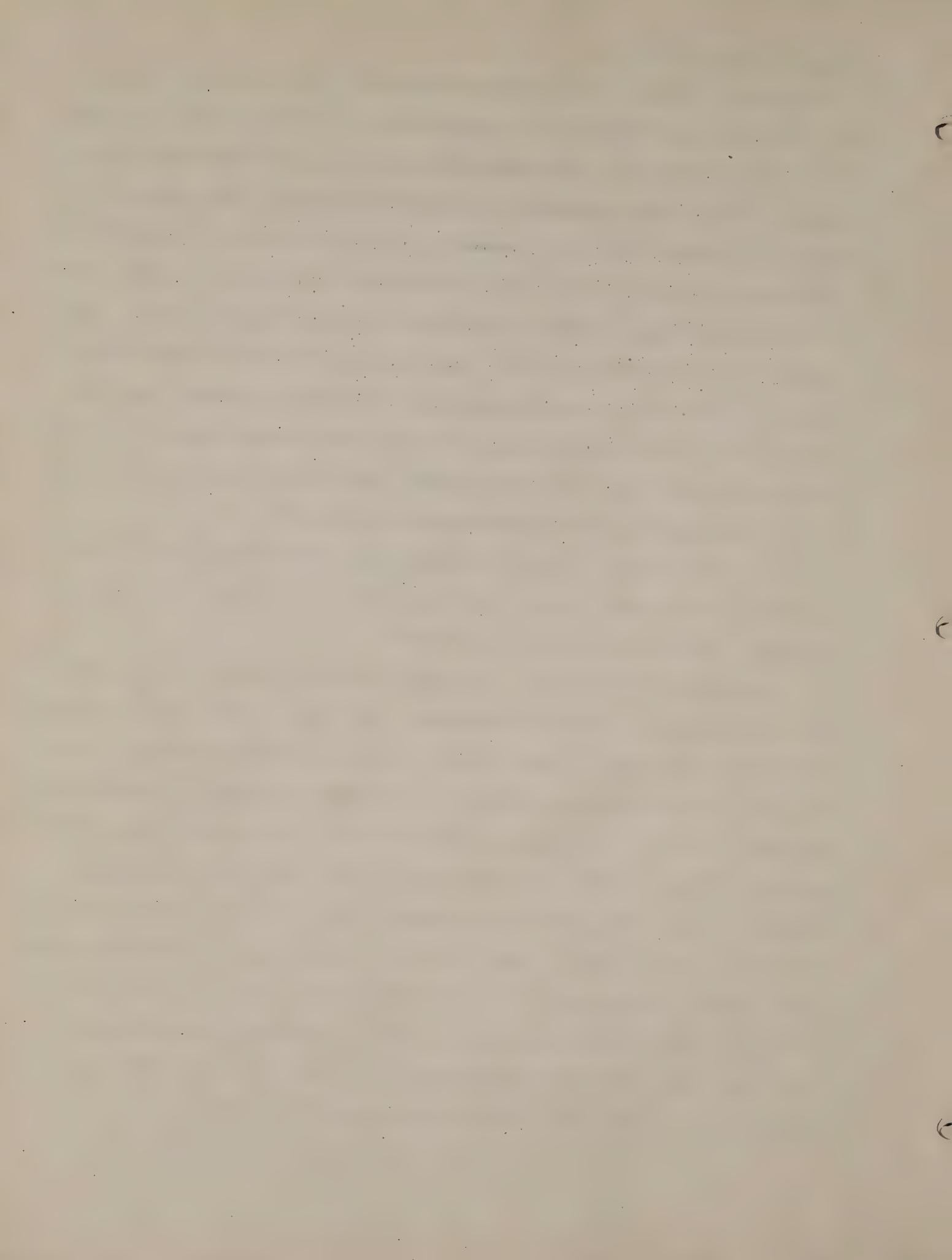


Friday, January 1, 1942

The second chapter is an analysis of the romantic protest against rationalism. N. shows that romanticism is of three types: 1) the Nietzschean - fascist; 2) the Marxist communist; 3) the Freudian pessimist. All the three types have in common is the purpose of exposing the dishonesty of reason. This statement is somewhat qualified in the case of communism, which paradoxically professes an inherent supra human reason as at work in the dialectic of history. N. then proceeds to indicate the social economic motivations of the three types of protest. The fascist type is characteristic of the lower middle class which is the victim of the (aristocratic) ruling and the upper middle class; the communist type of the proletarians and the pessimist of the ruling and upper middle class. The failure of the last group to look to an alternative to social revolution (why they should want an alternative?) leads them to pessimistic conclusion.

Niebuhr's exposition of the "social basis of conflicting theories," is on the whole correct, though like all such expositions is too neat to be true. I assume the same can be said of my own analyses.

From the soterical viewpoint the protest against rationalism is fundamentally the reassertion of the functional interests. The fact that they agree in exposing the dishonesty of reason ~~is~~ arises from the failure to reckon with reason as being as basic a factor to human nature as are the functional interests. ~~The functional~~ though to be sure less powerful than the latter. Why the rational interests are less powerful can easily be explained. They have emerged only recently. But that they are basic is proved by the very fact that they have to be satisfied somehow, even if in doing so they are deceived, or man deceives himself. The very pretensions of rational man are proof of man's inherent rationality not of his inherent irrationality. And the disciplines of culture and civilizations which are only for the most part a facade for his selfish purposes are proof that culture and discipline are indispensable to him.



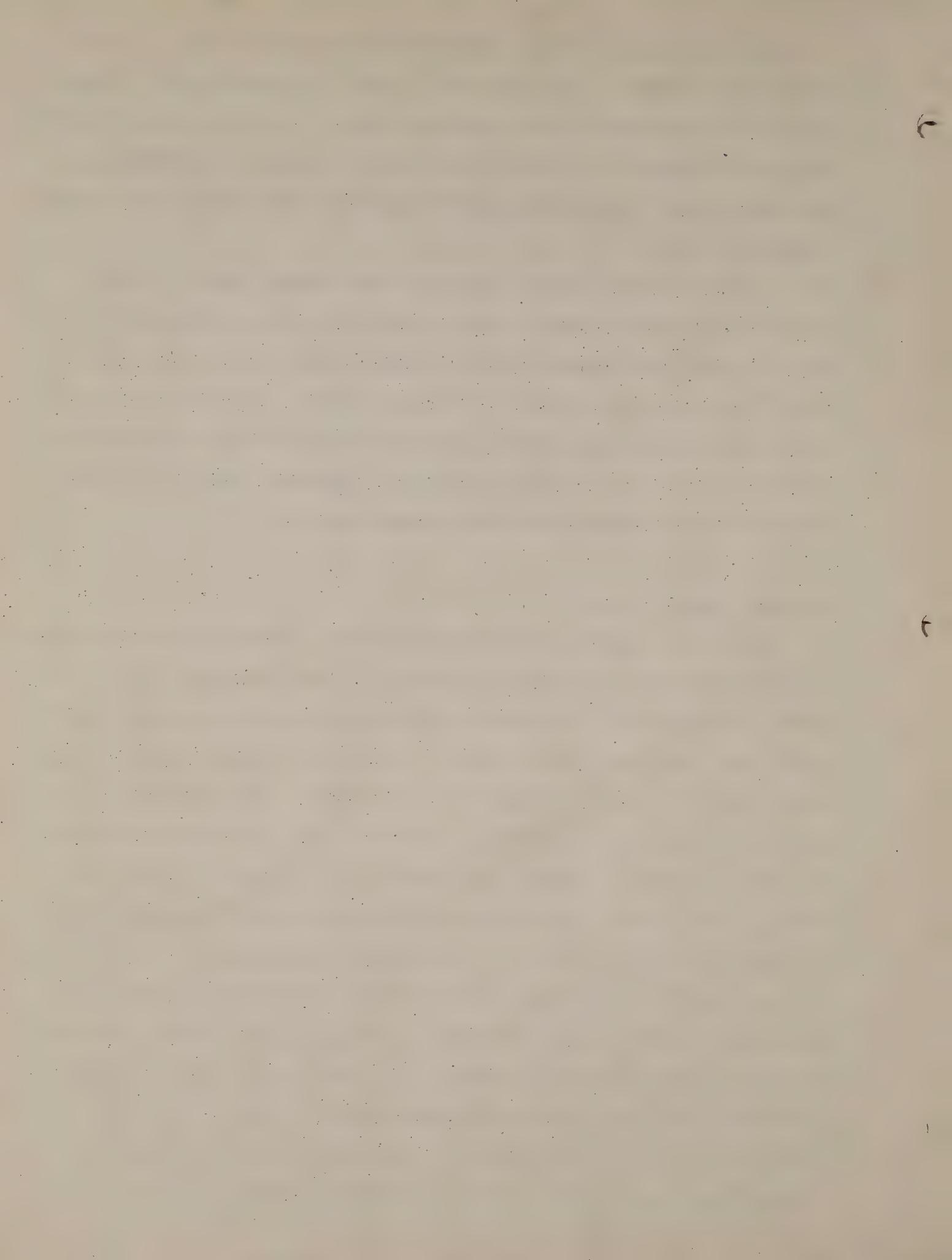
The third chapter discussion "Individuality in Modern Culture." In it N. proves that for lack of a viewpoint outside itself, individuality as a guiding principle of human life has been a failure. While at first it helped to liberate man from the bondage to nobility and the church, it ended up by ~~involving~~ thrusting him into the even more grievous tyranny of primitive racialism and imperial nationalism.

In soterics, personality is one of the three aspects of what one should live for and yet that it cannot be omitted from life's purpose does away at one stroke with all the dangers of on the one hand making the individual a god and on the other having him absorbed by the group. Moreover the group as a second aspect is not any one group but humanity in the sense of human brotherhood, unqualified by racial or national distinctions. This should forestall any such elimination of individuality as fascism seeks to achieve.

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Saturday, January 3, 1942

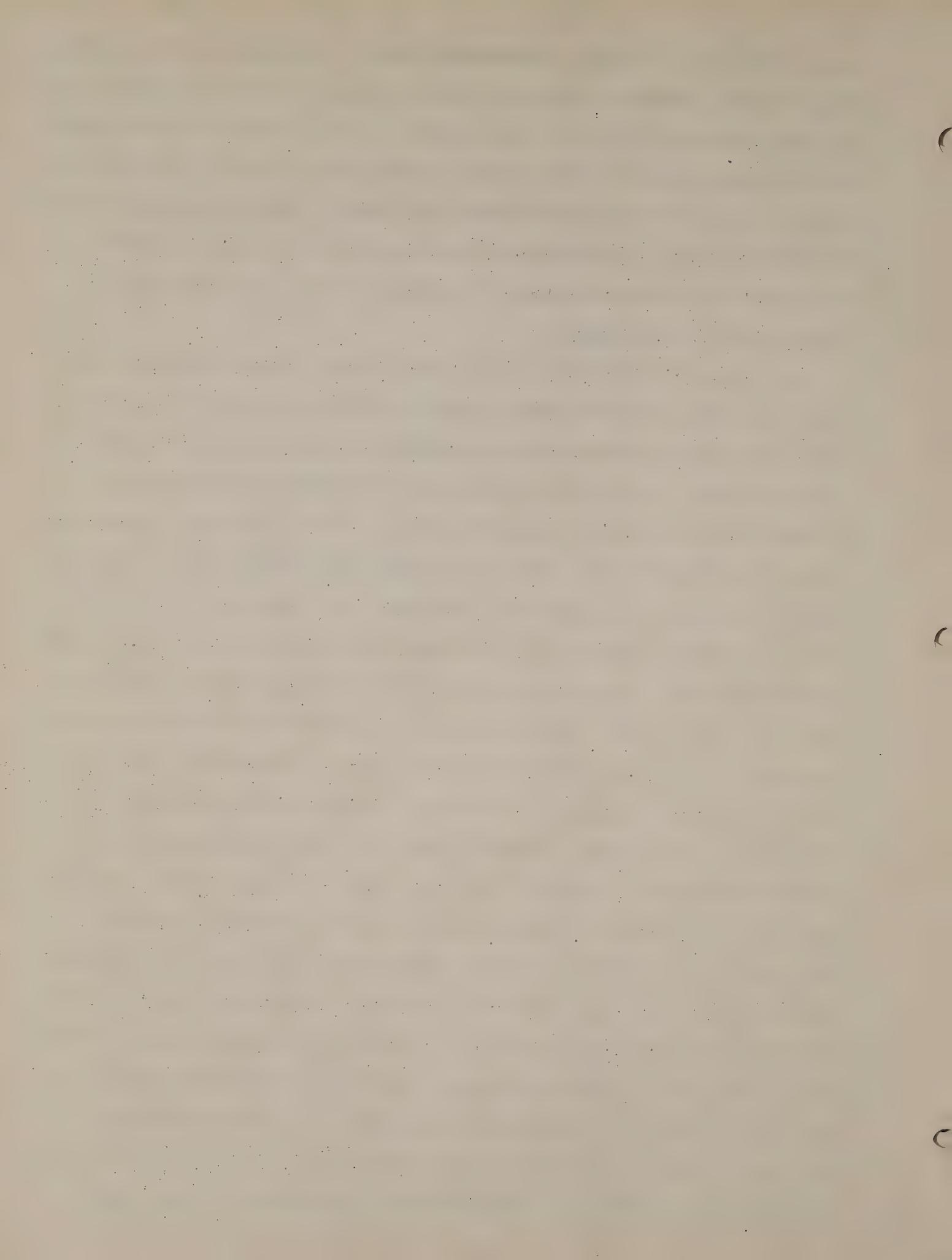
Soterics is intended to be a science and should therefore pursue scientific procedure. This means that the fact of man's striving to make the most of his life will be studied as all objects of scientific observation and interpretation are studied, namely with the purpose of noting all the possible observable facts and relations of their striving and coordinating them. The coordination and interpretation of those facts and relations will have to be in reference to some underlying "thing in itself" which for the present we may designate as spirit. The temptation to pursue our investigation further and to seek to explore this thing in itself may indeed be strong. Yet renunciation is necessary. It is such renunciation in general science that has been rewarded by fruitful thinking. The like result may be awaited in soterical sciences, if we do not lose ourselves in the intricacies of the problem of ultimate truth concerning spirit or by whatever other terms we may designate the innermost essence of man, nature or God. In mathematics, e.g. it is now maintained that "what points, lines, numbers 'actually' are cannot and need not be discussed in mathematical science. What



matters and what corresponds to 'verifiable' fact is structure and relationship, that two points determine a line, that numbers combine according to certain rules to form other numbers, etc. A clear insight into the necessity of dissubstantiation of elementary mathematical concepts has been one of the most important and fruitful results of modern postulational development." (What Is Mathematics XVIII). If soterical science is to enter on a course of postulational development it too must accept the dissubstantiation of the concepts personality, nature and God.

Humanity as a Spiritual Value

The concept of "humanity" as one of the spiritual values implies that the particular type of salvation which we wish to set up as the norm of all human effort cannot be realized unless we are prepared to accept and treat all human beings as equals. Only on the assumption of such equality is it possible to establish those relationships among human beings of which friendship is the type. Those are relationships which arise out of love, the inherent desire "to expend what is ours upon someone other than ourselves," John Macmurray contends that two types of motive underlie all active human relationships, viz: hunger and love. "Hunger is the motive which gives rise to actions designed to appropriate something for one's own use. Love, in contrast, is the motive of actions in which we expend what is ours upon something or someone other than ourselves. Both these types of motives are necessary, in the sense that they belong universally to the psychological constitution of human nature and are inescapable elements in the determination of human behavior. Both give rise to a nexus of dynamic relationships which bind us together. The first type gives rise to functional cooperation in work, and its basic forms are economic. The second gives rise to the sharing of a common life" (Freedom, edited by R. N. Ausban). The first is purposive in character and is designated "society," the second is an end in itself and constitutes "community." If human beings are to achieve community they must look upon the living together of all individuals and groups in a spirit of community, in that they will have learned to consider the common humanity as a sufficient bond, irrespective of any ulterior purpose, economic or political. It is of course



impossible in practice for any individual or group to live on those terms with all of mankind. But it is possible to demand of the individual and group that those with whom he does interact socially be accepted as equals and therefore as friends instead of as merely partners in some common undertaking. The interaction be that of community and an end in itself instead of as that of society and only a means to some ulterior end. When this mode of interaction is accepted as the norm for all individuals and groups, we have the realization of the spiritual ideal of "humanity."

Incidentally the foregoing analysis helps us understand why the cooperation of the peoples in the valley of (p.256?) was displeasing to Yhwah. It was not cooperation for its own sake, but for the purpose of acquiring power and fame. Such cooperation must needs lead to competition in the scramble for power and cannot but end, as did the enterprise of those people, in mutual strife and division.

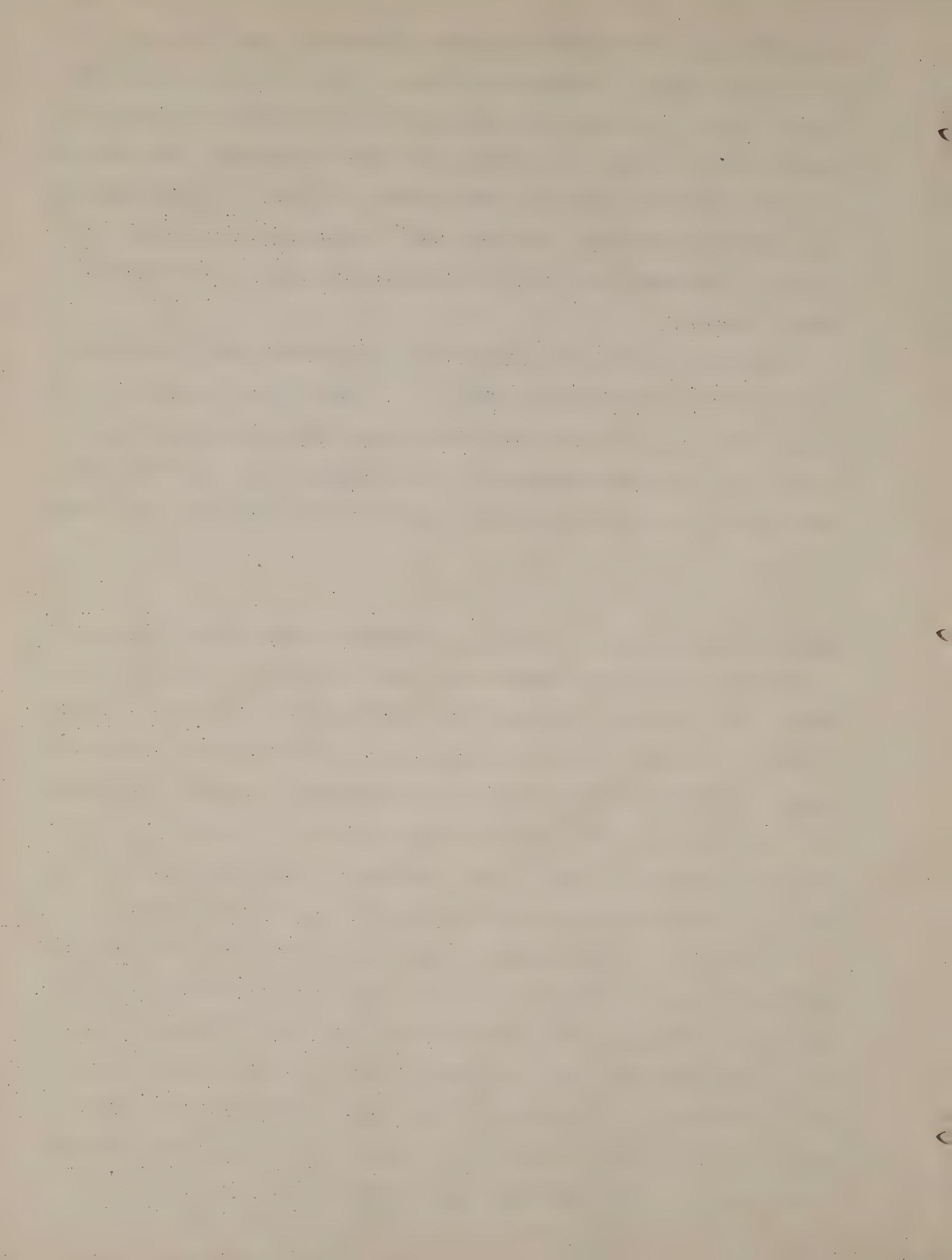
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Sunday, January 2, 1942

The will to salvation as proof of God's existence

The function of the God idea in the soterical approach to human life is suggested by R. Niebuhr's interpretation of human nature in the light of Biblical doctrine. According to that interpretation the quintessence of all sin is pride, whether it manifest itself as pride of power, of knowledge, of self-righteousness. Pride consists in the human tendency to deny any limits to what one can do or should do, can attain or should attain. The denial of such limits is due to the denial of one's subordination to a higher law and power than one's self.

The failure to recognize that the urge to make the most of one's life, the opportunities and the ability to fulfill that urge or to approximate such fulfillment emanate from a source that transcends one's self is at the bottom of human pride. Hence instead of defining God as was done in the Middle Ages by means of negative attributes which merely stated what God was not, we should define God in terms which negate man, or which state what man is not. Man is not the center of his own being; a Power that transcends man is the center of his being. Man is not self-sufficient, because only God is self-sufficient. Man cannot possess



absolute knowledge. Man cannot be absolutely righteous, because his righteousness is conditioned or vitiated by self-interest. This knowledge which man must have about himself is essential to his salvation. Insofar as that is true, this very knowledge implies that the source of his salvation as of his life in general is a power not himself, in God. This is, indeed, the most fundamental proof for the existence of God, a proof based upon man's incontestable need to make the most of his life. It is because man strives for salvation that we can be sure there is a God.

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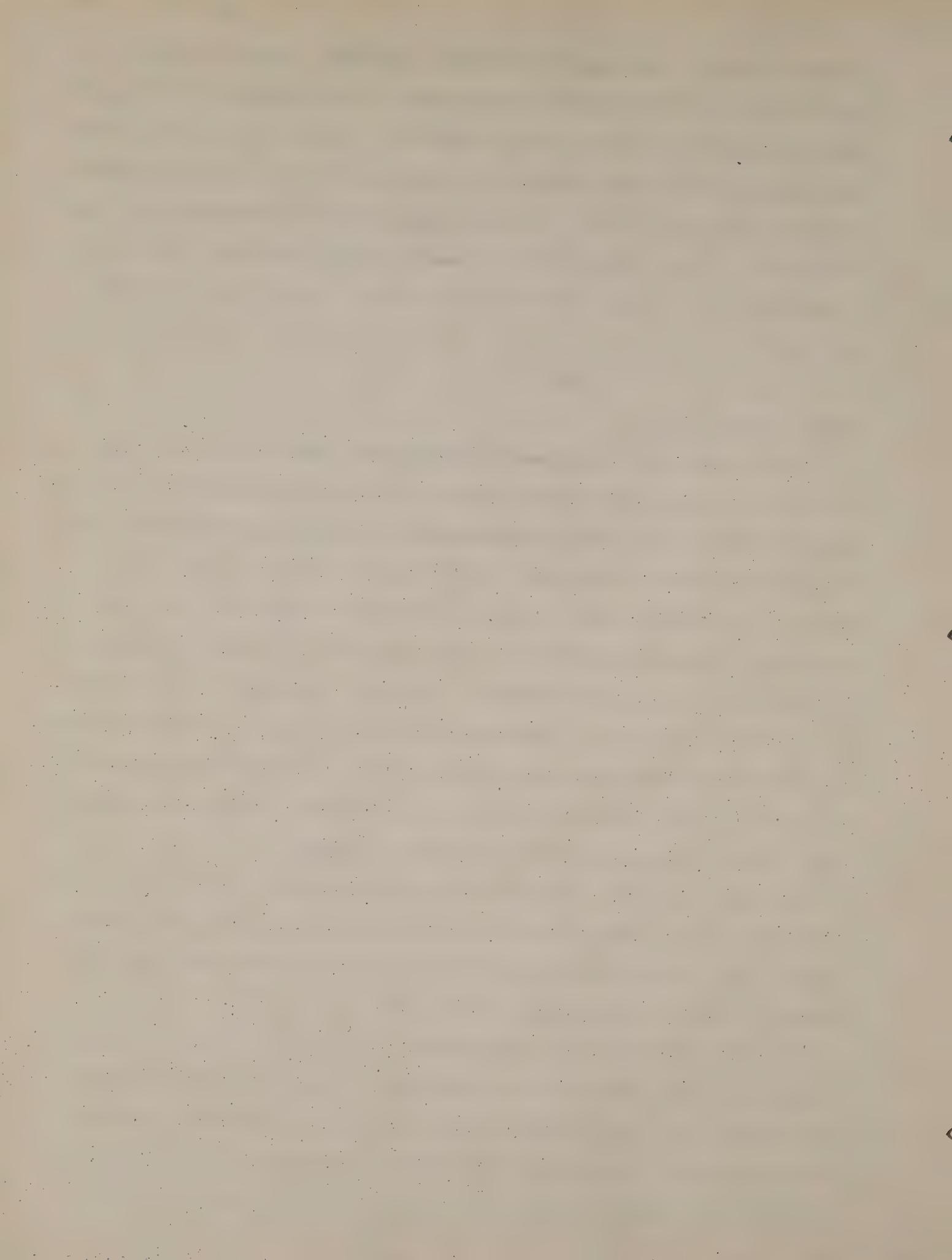
Monday, January 5, 1942

I do not know what has happened to Finkelstein. Whether as a result of his efforts to raise money for the Seminary, or of his contacts with the Seminary graduates, he seems to ~~know~~ have become aware that American Judaism is fast disintegrating due mainly to the fact that the Jewish laity see no need for it. He thinks that something must be done to check this disintegration. For the first time since I am back from Palestine he has consulted me on a matter pertaining to Jewish life, or any matter whatever. I met with him and Arzt at his request to discuss as he first put it what should be done to prevent the Seminary campaign for funds from remaining only money raising efforts, and to become an opportunity for intensifying the Jewish life of those who are asked to support the Seminary.

First step in calling of conference on future of Judaism

The three of us were groping for some common purpose. We finally decided to call in some of the most vigorous minded among the Seminary graduates -- about a dozen of them, who are within reach, and to place the problem before them. The meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 14.

I am not altogether sure, I must confess, that this is a bona fide effort. It may be, for all I know, a ruse to emasculate the Reconstructionist movement. Arzt may have told him that there is considerable dissatisfaction on the part of the graduates with the non-committed attitude of the Seminary in all matters of a controversial character, and that there is danger of their openly professing



Reconstructionism. This might create a rift in the ranks, and weaken the Seminary. To forestall any such development Arzt may have suggested to Finkelstein to draw me into some effort that would immobilize the Reconstructionist movement. Perhaps I am wrong in suspecting that to be the motive of Finkelstein's apparently sudden change of attitude toward me. I hope I am wrong.

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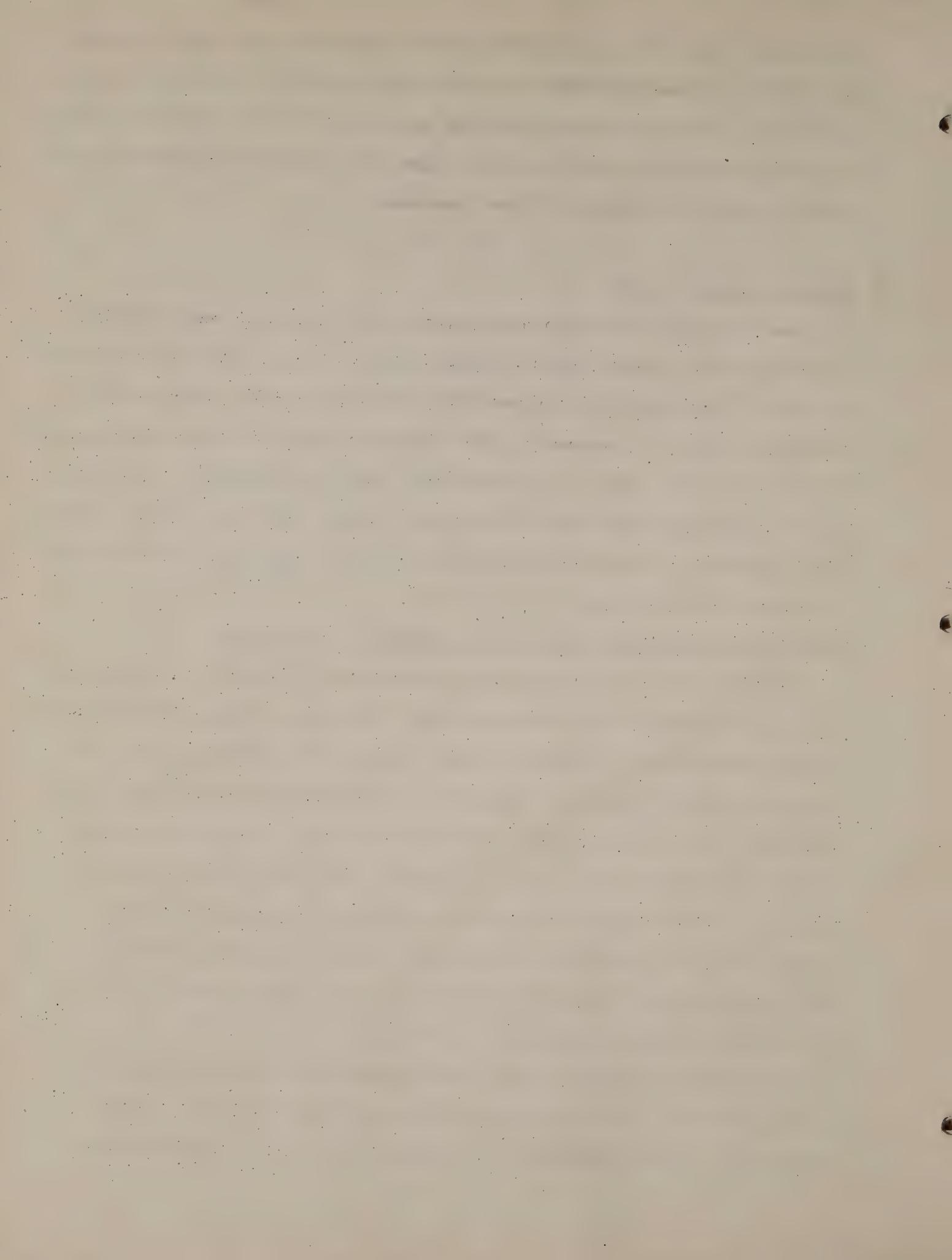
Tuesday, January 6, 1942

Some time ago I received a mimeographed copy of a book by Rabbi Roland B. Gittelson called "Modern Jewish Problems." It is to be published in book form by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and is intended for young people's discussion groups. In a separate letter Gittelson asked me to give him my opinion of the book. When I read it I realized that I could not very well convey to him in writing what was wrong with its entire get up and to make any adequate constructive suggestions. I therefore replied that he should come to see me. We finally got together this afternoon.

The problematic approach to teaching of Judaism to young people.

I pointed out to him that the book was weakest in that which it should be its main function namely, to get the young people to think in integrated fashion. This involves getting them to realize the implications of the terms they think with. The socratic method consists not merely in the insistence on definitions of the terms used in speech, but on such definitions as lead to reckoning with correct and important implications. In fact it would be well for a course on Jewish problems to be utilized for the purpose of getting young people to think in straight and organic fashion, and for them to realize that it is being so utilized. The art of integrated thinking is something they don't teach either in the elementary or in the higher institutions of learning.

Not being a talmudist or near talmudist Gittelson saw the point at once and did not try to vindicate his own treatment of Jewish problems. In fact he admitted that I articulated clearly for him what he himself had vaguely felt.



In the course of the conversation he told me of a curious incident in connection with his book. At one of the sessions of the recent annual convention of the CCAR he read excerpts of his book. In the course of his reading he happened to mention my name and some of the things I had to say about Judaism. At once a number of the "old guard" objected to the inclusion of anything I said in a book intended for Reform congregations. He met their objections by quoting passages from "Judaism as a Civilization." Although the objectors were silenced he felt that it would be wiser not to make too many references to me or to Reconstructionism in his forthcoming book.

Gittelson is a rabbi in Rockville Centre, L.I. His congregation consists mostly of young people but they are much younger in Judaism than they are in age. Their interest in Judaism dates from about 1936.

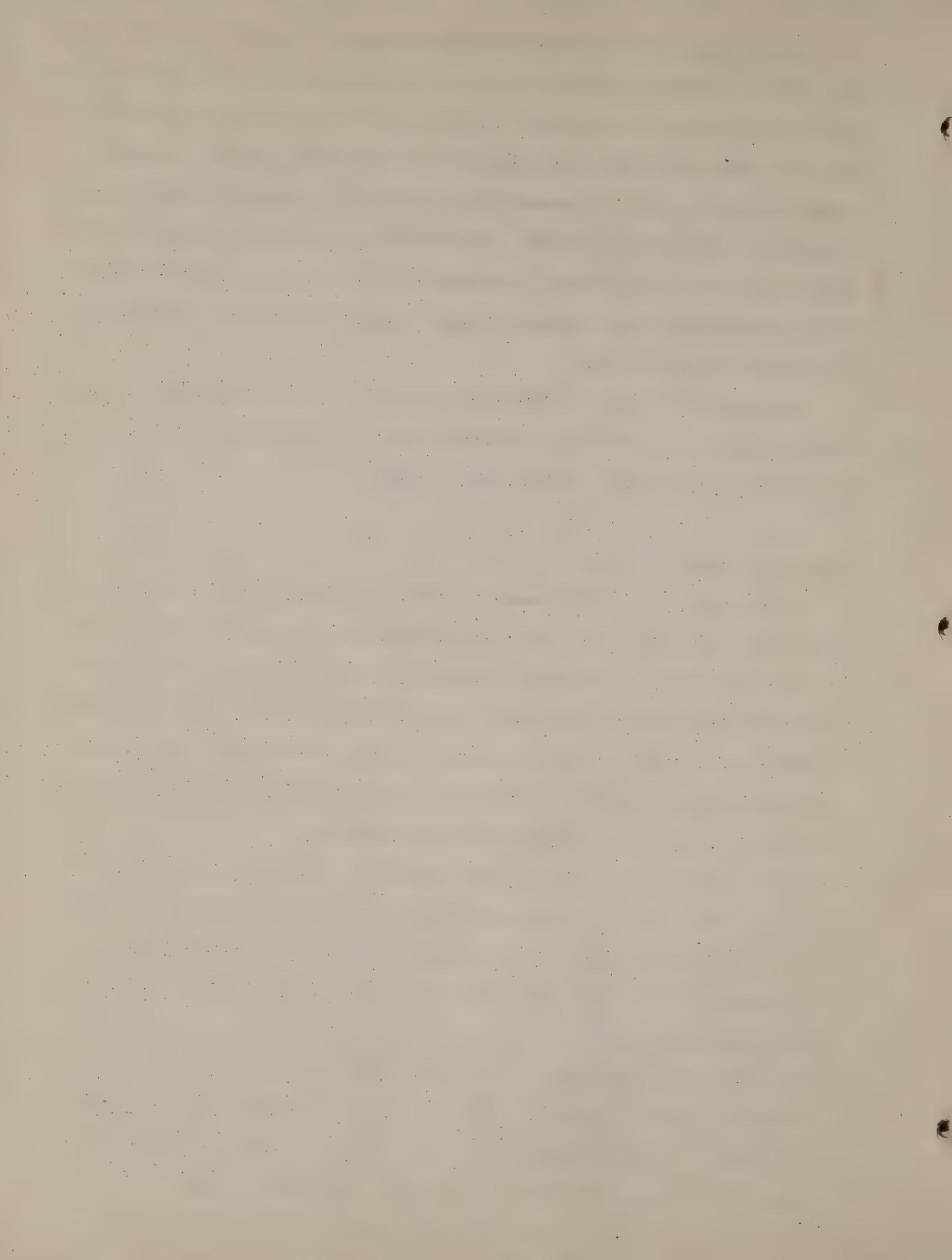
Polarity in spiritual values

The principle of polarity seems to pervade all phases of reality. It should therefore not surprise us to find it pervade also the spiritual interests with all the drives needs or values which pertain to them. If we want those interests to be well served we must give heed to the principle polarity. What does giving heed to that principle involve in their case? The answer is: reckoning with the fact that the striving for salvation includes in its purpose both the awareness of new creative possibilities and the awareness of limitations.

The tendency of the ancients was to emphasize one pole in the purpose of salvation, viz.: that of awareness of limitations. The tendency of the moderns is to affirm the other pole, viz the awareness of creative possibilities.

Polarity does not imply that both poles are of equal potency. All that it implies is plus and negative.

In the case of the three groups of spiritual values the polarity in the values of personality shows itself by a minimum of creative possibilities vs a maximum of limitations. In the values of human brotherhood, it shows itself in a large increase of creative possibilities, depending on the size and quality of interaction among the members of a group and in a shrinking of the limitations.



In God the extent of limitation may be regarded as infinitesimal as compared with the creative possibilities which are well nigh infinite. But that an element of limitation must be associated with God, at least from a soterical viewpoint, which is the only viewpoint possible to our thinking, enables all actual experience to fall into a consistent pattern; whereas the traditional assumption that the conception of God must inherently be regarded as the negation of all limitation has led to sophistry on the part of those who want to believe in God, and to atheism on the part of those who do not want to believe.

The three groups of spiritual values are mutually related as part to whole and whole to part. The element of creativity in man, his freedom, is the infinitesimal limitation in God; the element of limitation in man is part of the well nigh infinite creativity of God.

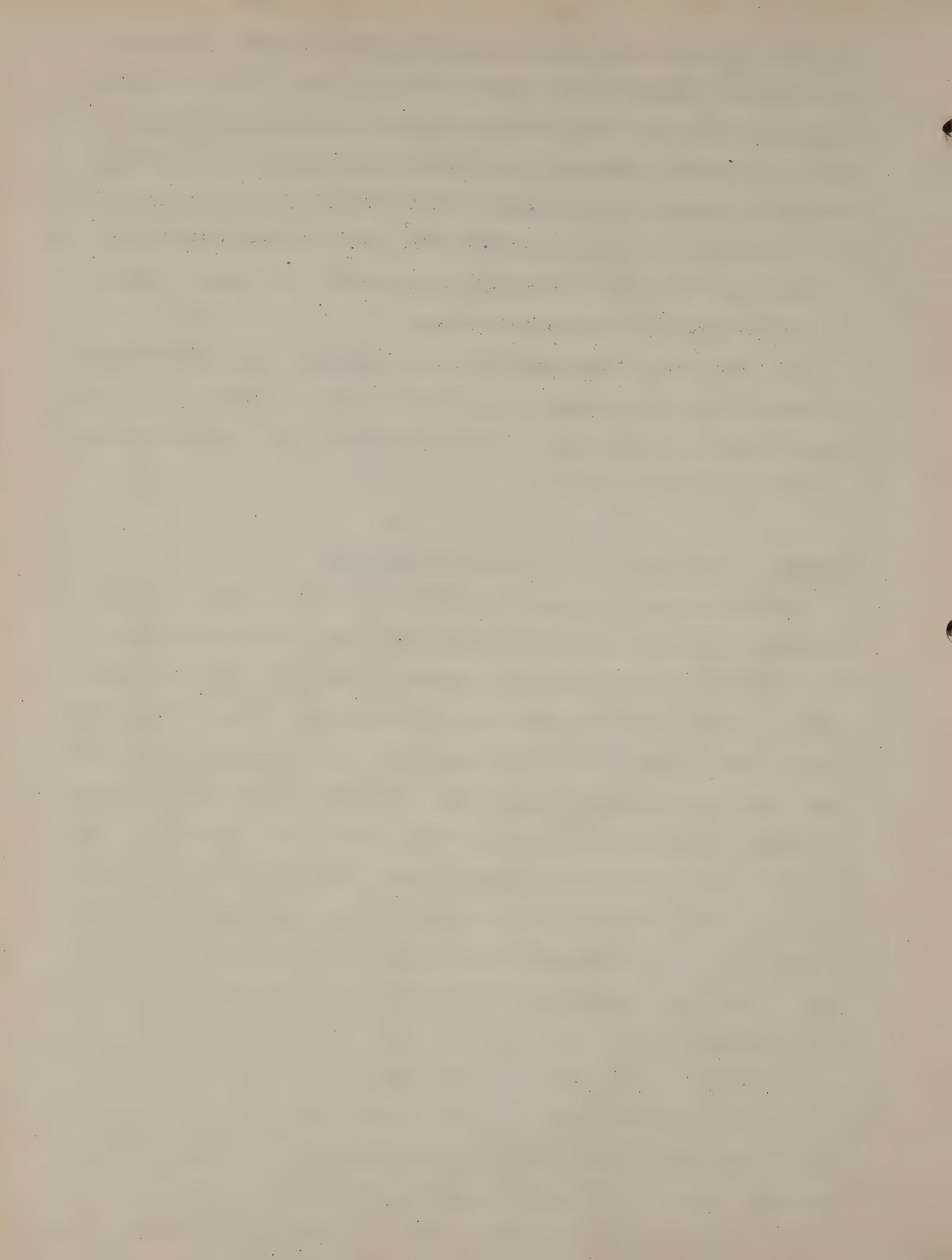
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Thursday, January 8, 1942

Holiness or godliness

Eureka once again! There are two aspects to the value "God" as the goal of salvation, one refers to the transcendent reality which is independent of man, the other is the transformation to be achieved in man. The first aspect may be termed "godhood," the second "godliness." The reality of "godhood" though independent of man cannot be conceived by man unless he live in accordance with those laws, relationships and conditions of existence which constitute that reality. In that sense the awareness of what is genuinely godhood, and not merely its false substitute is the goal of human conduct, if such conduct is to lead to salvation. On the other hand, godliness as the state of the human being which is an awareness of being like God, is that quality of human life which likewise is the goal of conduct that leads to salvation. The traditional term for godliness or god-likeness is holiness.

But in order to know what godliness or holiness is we have to know what God as a transcendent reality is from the standpoint of salvation. When e.g. Lao-tze advises "Be thyself like Tao" he has to tell us how he conceives Tao in terms of salvation. Tao who is "the source of all things" is defined as being "omnipotent by non-assertion.: Hence to be like Tao means "achieve in thyself the same supreme



simplicity the non-assertive naturalness which is the most real of all powers" (Hicing Living Religions p. 71). It is apparent that we are not helped very much by this conception of God. While it is true that there are situations in which we are helped by being told to be unassertive and natural they cover only a very limited area of human life.

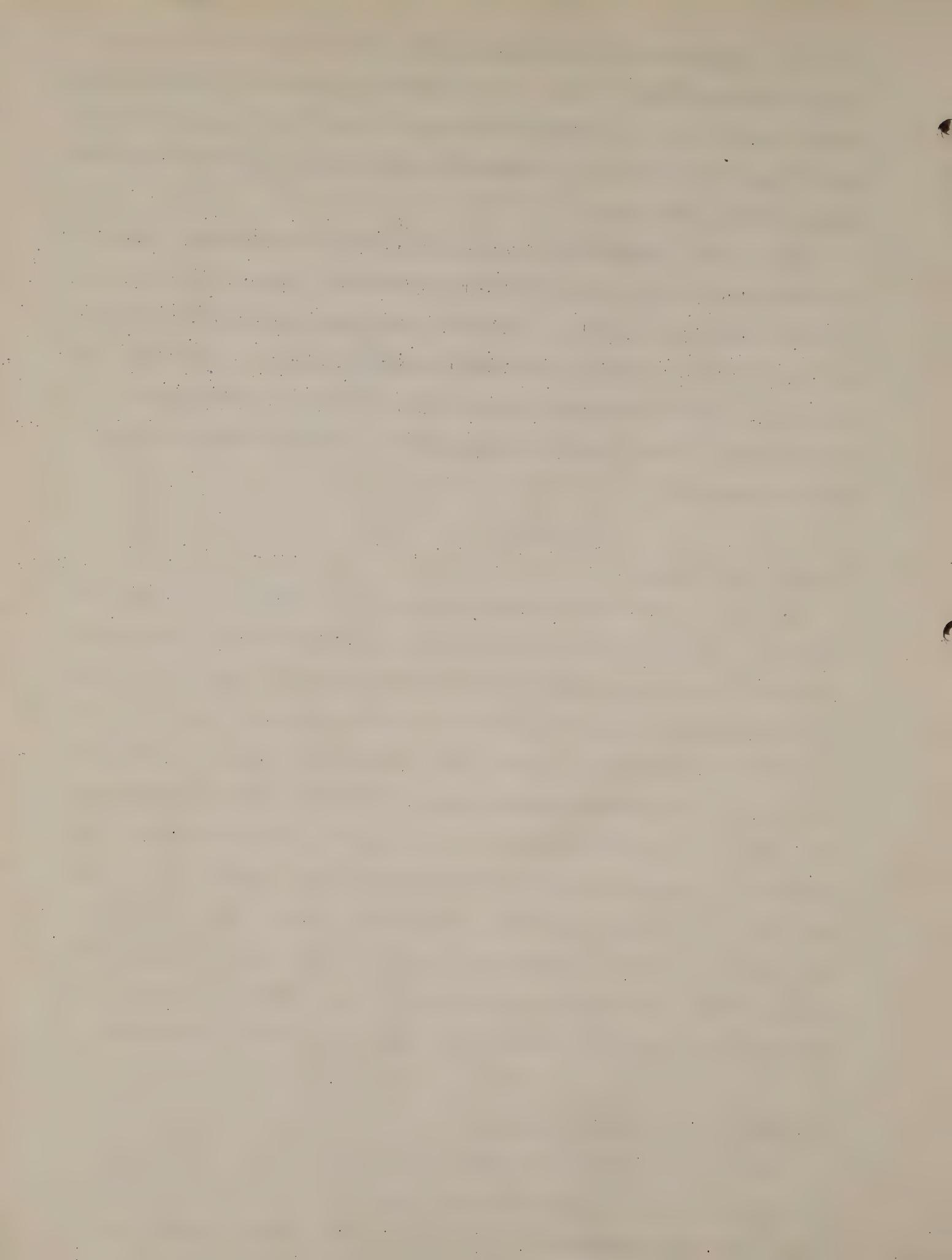
Some far more comprehensive principle of guidance is necessary. None can be more comprehensive than the one that derives from the conception of God as the Power that makes for salvation. Godliness, god-likeness or holiness then means becoming to the extent that it is humanly possible, a force for salvation. It is therefore evident that the one basic problem which must obsess us and which must be at least partially on the road to a solution is how we are to conceive salvation.

The function of prayer

The place of prayer in the soterical approach to life is, of course, like everything else connected with that approach, determined by the way we conceive salvation. Since we must needs conceive salvation in such a way as to relate it to the impersonal working of the forces in nature, we have to dissociate from the conception of prayer anything that borders on theurgy or magic. To do that we have to realize that prayer belongs neither to the domain of functional values, nor to that of the rational values but to that of the spiritual values. There its function is to bring the soul or personality in rapport with God, i.e. to effect the state of mind known as godliness or holiness. The recital of a religious benediction or of grace after meals is intended to awaken an attitude of godliness in reference to some particular situation or enjoyment, and to remind us of the need of utilizing that situation or enjoyment as a means of salvation.

Personality as a spiritual value

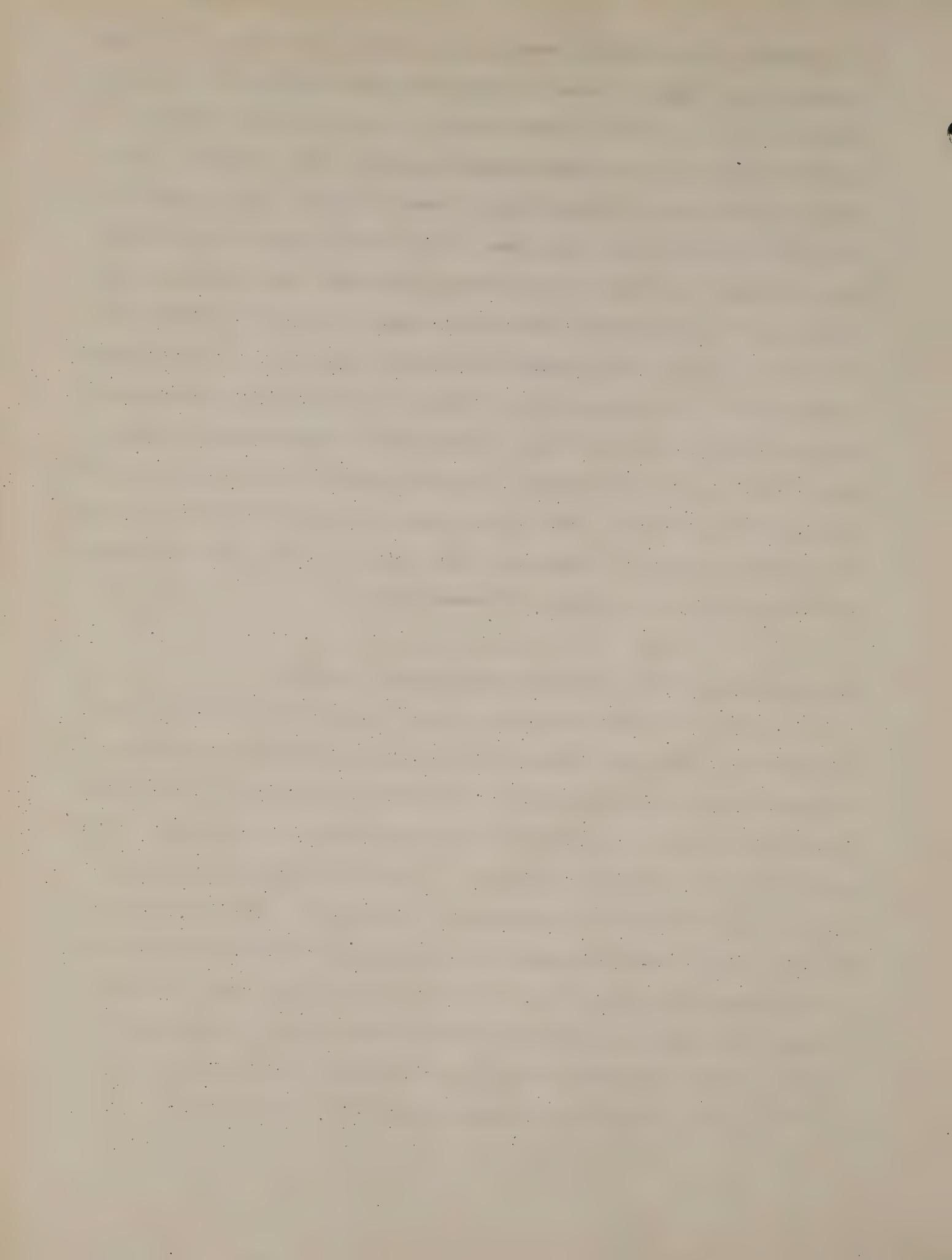
Personality as a goal in the striving for salvation is evident in the concept of "self-possession" or "self-mastery." That goal is active in all forms of self-discipline, ~~Vague recommendations can easily be followed and utilized as a means~~



and accounts for the universal preference of specific rules of conduct to vague recommendations. Specific rules can easily be followed and utilized as a means of ~~more~~ self discipline. Vague recommendations call for more mental energy in formulating rules of conduct than the average person is able to expend. The attraction which monastic orders have for numerous people is that it provides them with definite rules of self discipline. In fact the extremes to which ascetics will go in their self flagellations show the price which some are ready to pay for the goal of self-mastery. That the attainment of the goal can easily degenerate into spiritual pride is quite self evident. "The yogins , "says Hocking (Living Rel. 86) "are engaged in the active practice of religious discipline for the sake of self-mastery and ultimate release through enlightenment -- perhaps also for the sake of the enjoyment of those supernatural powers which are promised to the adepts in the yoga. Some of these men are of notable power and character; some of them have gained a remarkable control pf physical and mental processes, a control of which the true yogin never makes display."

The distinction between Conservatism and Reconstructionism

I discussed with Ira this afternoon the conference which Finkelstein has called for next Wednesday afternoon, and in which both of us are to take part. The question I raised was: What are the specific objections which the Conservatives raise against us Reconstructionists? We arrived at the following: They object to 1) our conception of God as ? because we negate the element of personality as traditionally understood; 2) our conception of Judaism as an evolving civilization, thus doing away with the acceptance of rabbinism as normative; 3) our attitude toward ritual practices as no longer coming under the category of law; and 4) our refusal to accept the present organization of the synagogue as justifying it to occupy the position of centrality in communal life, and our insistence tht the community be the main social unit of Jewish life.



Saturday, January 10, 1942

Happiness, gratitude, beatitude

We might identify the actual attainment of salvation by certain states of mind which correspond to the three groups of spiritual values. Happiness corresponds to the fulfilment of selfhood or personality, gratitude to human brotherhood and beatitude to godhood.

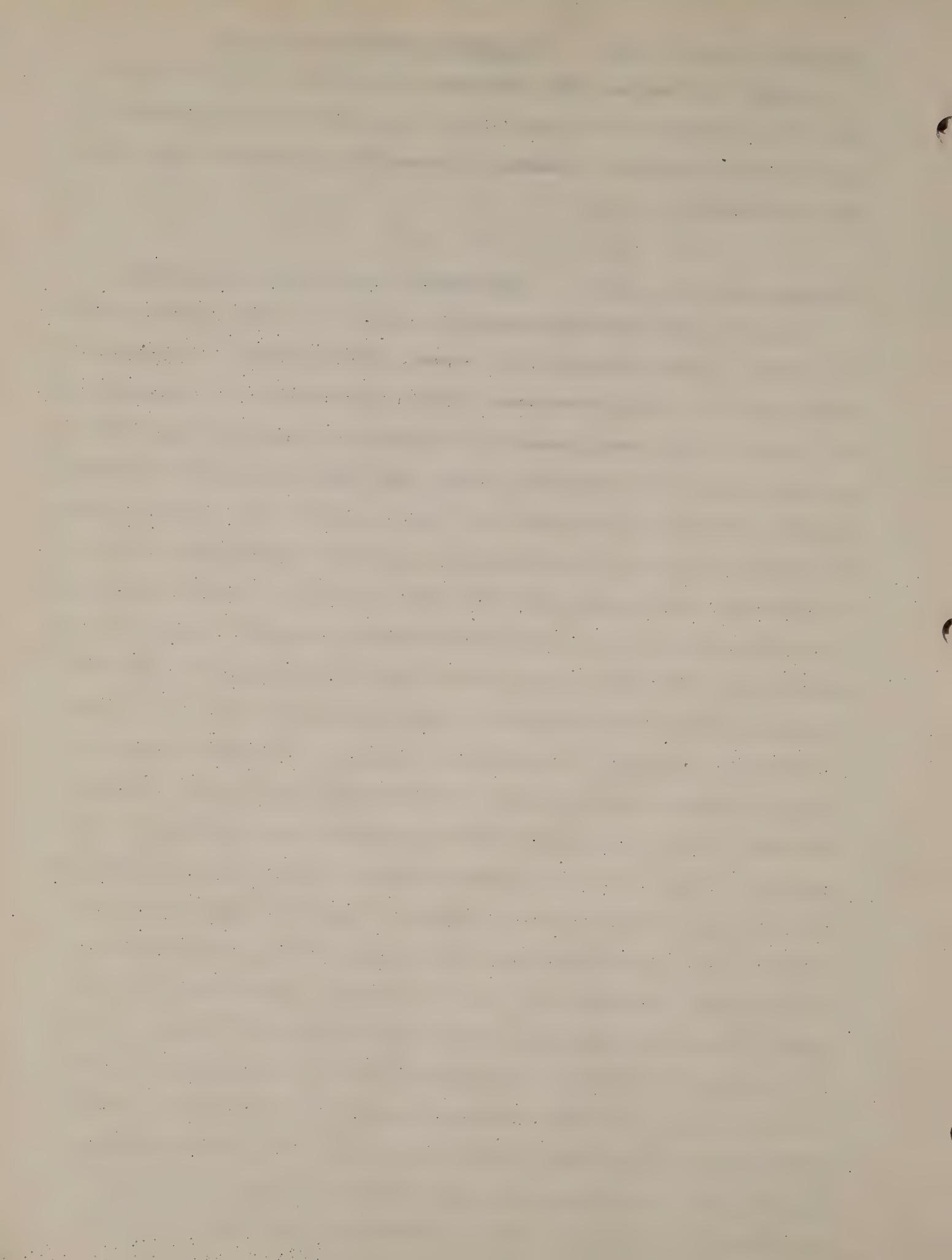
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Wednesday, January 14, 1942

The conference on the future of Judaism

The meeting with Finkelstein decided on Monday Jan. 5 (see above) took place this morning. Present were Arzt, Ira, Bokser, Levitsky, Kazis, Si. Greenberg, Gordis (who had to leave) Routtenberg, Tafield from Houston Tex. (who happened to be in town). In his opening remarks F. pointed out the need for doing something to stem the rapid disintegration of Jewish life, which has become more menacing than ever. What we need, he said, is to make an effort to save Judaism (by which he apparently meant the religious and ritual aspect of Jewish life); 2) to raise the standard of Jewish morals which has become lowered as a result of detachment from the synagogue; and 3) to clarify the ideational aspect of Judaism. He then called on me to express my views. After pointing out my satisfaction with the realization of the present situation in Jewish life on the part of F. and those who responded to the call, I suggested that it would be a mistake to expect that any specific remedy can be thought up and applied forthwith. It is a high time that those who are qualified to discuss the inner problem of Judaism set aside at least eight or ten weeks of concentrated study and collective thinking with a view to finding a way out of our present impasse. A commission ought to be formed that would hold continuous sessions over the summer months, hold hearings and deliberate among themselves, and then on the basis of those hearings and discussions offer some comprehensive plan for the salvaging of Judaism.

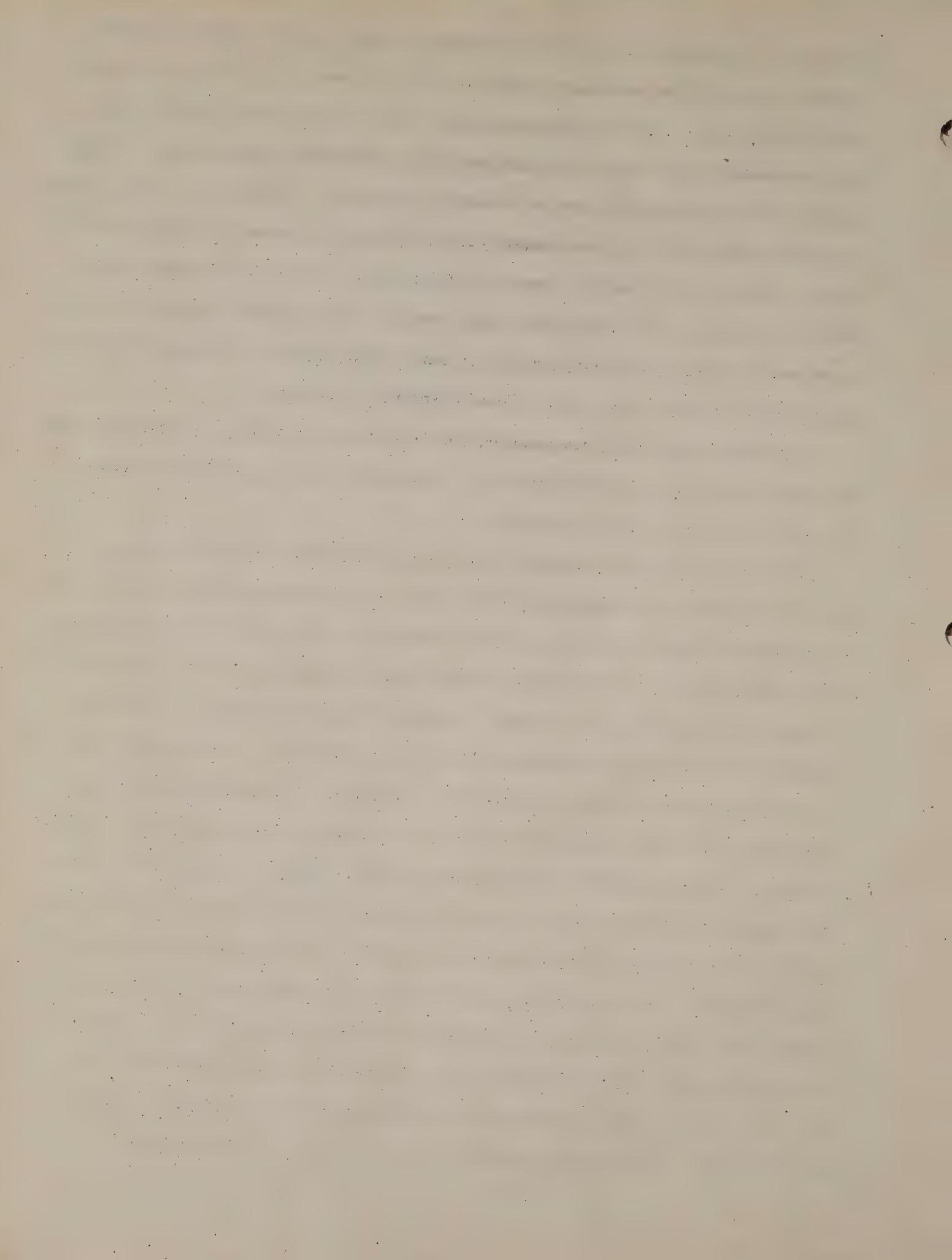
Everyone of the other men had something to say on the abnormality of our present situation. Routtenberg mentioned the fact that a group of over twenty women whom he had been giving a course in Judaism for over a year saw nothing wrong with Judge Jerome Frank's article in the Sat. Eve. Post in which he defended American Jews against the anti-Semites who charge them with being



unAmerican. His defense consisted in proving that the Jews are giving up their Judaism. Arzt told of someone who said to him "You assume that Jews are worried over the fact that Judaism is disappearing. Since it has nothing to offer them they go elsewhere for such social and spiritual nourishment as they need." Kazis complained that the people have no interest in services. In his particular congregation the young people of his temple refuse to mix with those who live across the tracks. Levitsky said he had a sense of futility and that what we needed was a "Lebovitch Rabbe." Ira found fault with the fact that everybody spoke as though there were no such thing as a Reconstructionist philosophy and program. If Reconstructionism is wrong, we ought to know wherein it is wrong.

F. favored my original suggestion about the need of having a commission study the problem over a long period of time. He named a committee to draw up plans, consisting of myself, Arzt, Levitsky.

F. in replying after everybody was through singled out Ira's allusion to Reconstructionism. Ira happened to say that, unlike Levitsky who say all his work in the rabbinate end infutility, and all because he lacked clarity of purpose, he had no such feeling because he had a very clear purpose before him. This attitude F. described as lacking in humility. Reconstructionism could not possibly be adequate if it failed to accomplish what it set out to do. If it did not succeed in getting Jewish scholars to direct their attention to the present (this was a reference to my having charged the scholars with neglecting all problems of the present) it must be lacking something fundamental. When Ira snapped back "Then democracy is a failure because it has not received the whole hearted support of the democratic peoples." But F. retorted "Of course there must be something wrong with democracy. An idea includes the technique of implementing it." This was a clever reply, but it does not really answer the point raised by Ira. I was not going to press it, because I felt nothing would be gained by this kind of controversy. I was after all interested in persuading those present to adopt the plan of calling into being a commission on the problem of Jewish life.

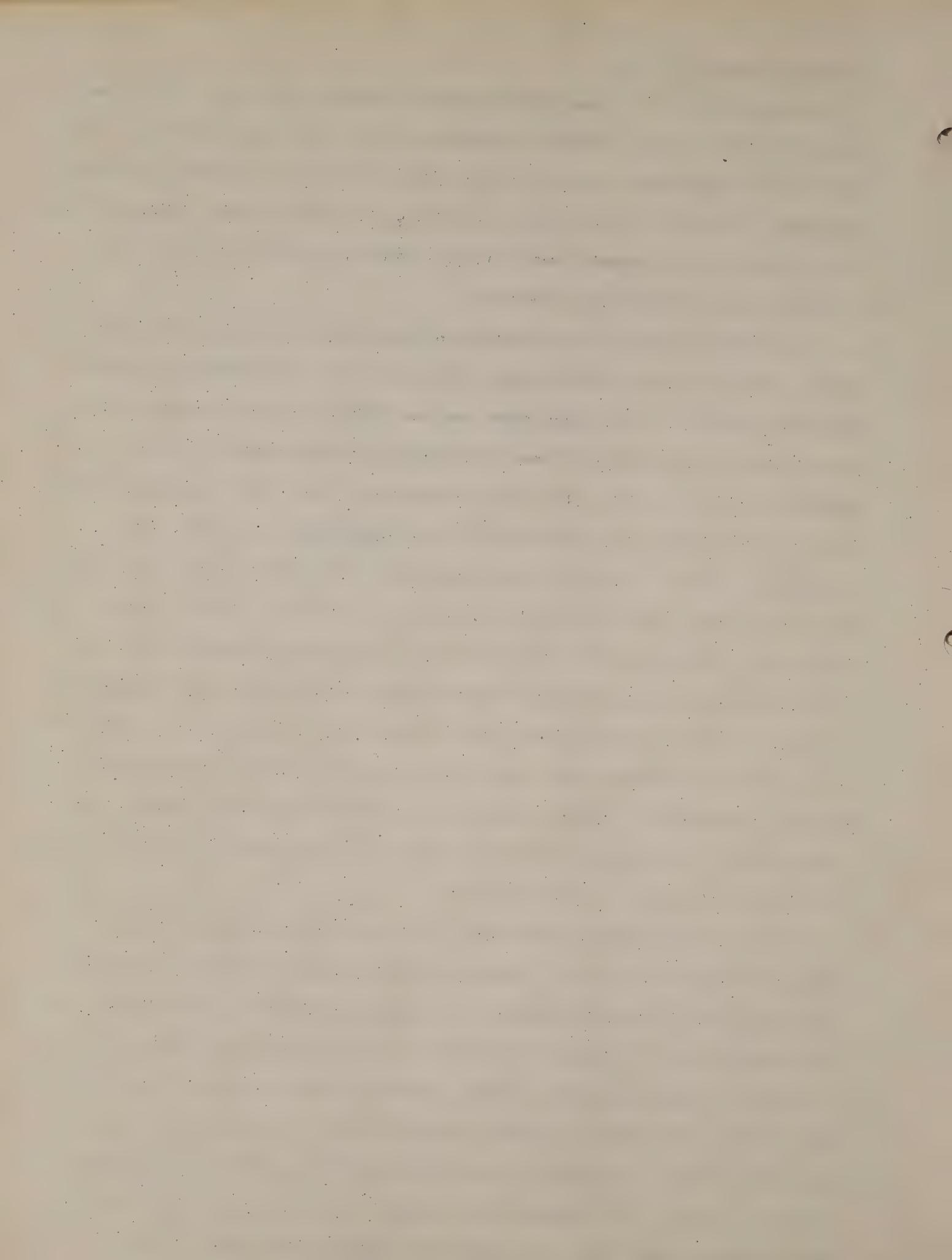


Thursday, January 15, 1942

Metaphysically, i.e. from the standpoint of reality considered apart from human life and its needs, there is no meaning to the values good and evil. Hence the relation of good and evil to our conception of God can have meaning only when we realize that we are dealing with a soterical conception of God. (This calls for a correction of statement beginning "The point at which, etc. in Vol. IX, p. 173 and similar statements elsewhere.)

We naturally laugh off astronomical and geological predictions about our earth. Assuming that in a billion years from now a comet will smash up the solar system or that even in much less time than that the ice age will return on this planet, these remote prospects need not interfere with any serious attempt to formulate a plan for making the most of human life. But I for one am frightened by such possibilities as are unfolded by the contemplation of a human world in which science would be applied in such manner as is described in the selection I am about to quote from the article by B. Russell on "How Will Science Change Morals?" (this jrnal vol. XIV, p. 328) Even if it take one or two millenia before such possibilities are realized the mere contemplation of them as a likely development of human life is, to say the least, most disconcerting. It exposes on relativity to all codes and standards which deprives life of all meaning. I cannot see any meaning to personality, human brotherhood or godhood if Russell's vision of the future is at all realizable. Maybe our faith in the spiritual values is proof that it is based on nonsense. But here it is:

"The more sensational possibilities (of the development of science) are connected largely with scientific breeding. Given a greater knowledge of heredity than we at present possess, it would, of course be possible to improve the breed almost indefinitely. The best 25 percent of each generation of women might be set apart for maternity, and the best 1 percent of each generation of men; this would require, of course, a complete revolution in all our moral ideas as regards marriage and family. It does not seem likely that the western nations would adopt any such plan except in some great emergency, but one could imagine it adopted by Japan, with the result that in a century the Japanese race would become so



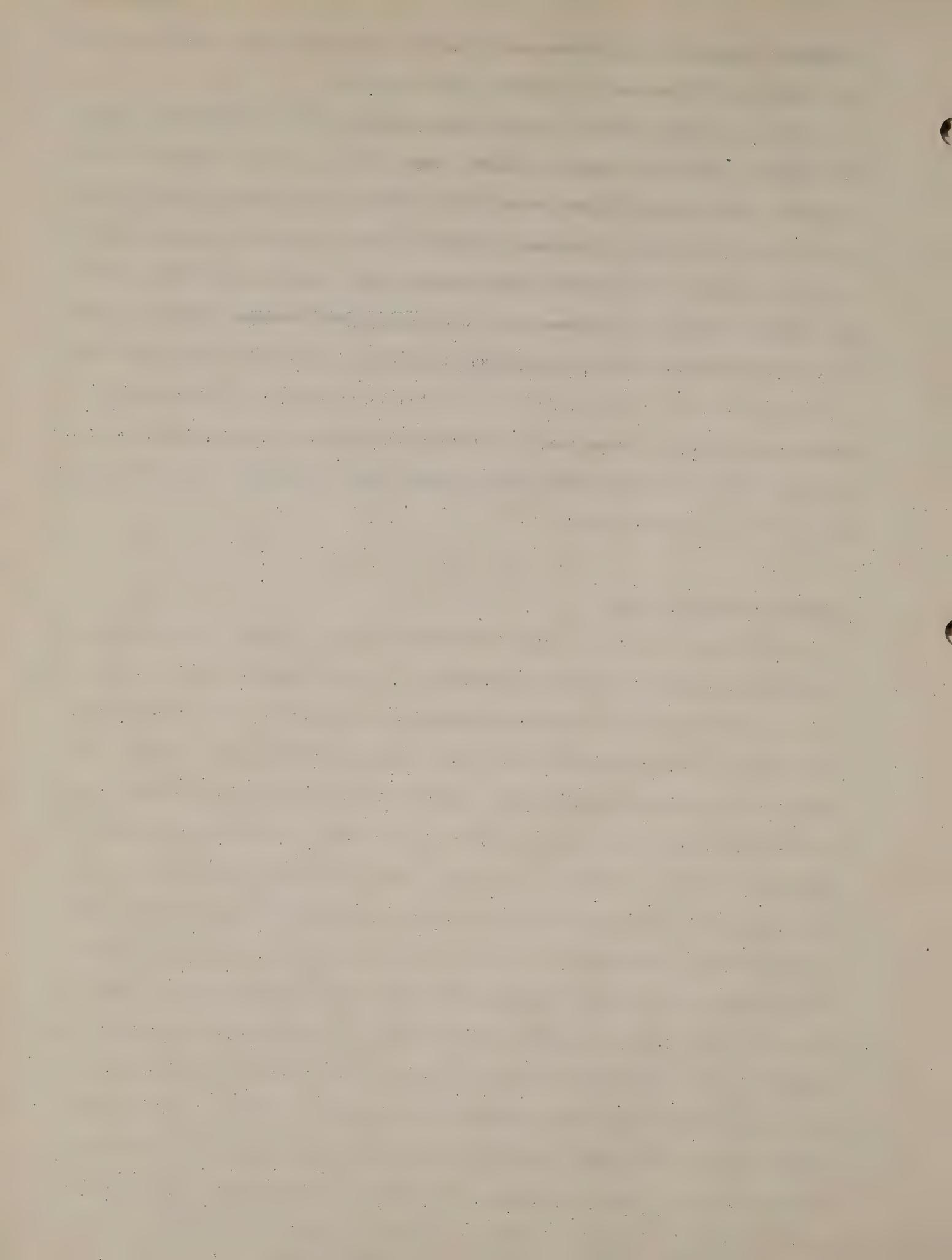
enormously superior to all others as to be able to acquire world dominion. Fear then might terrify the western nations into imitation.

"It is sometimes thought that all such schemes would be impossible, because they would be contrary to what is called 'human nature.' This I believe to be a delusion. Human nature is much more plastic than it was formerly supposed to be, but it has to be molded in the early years of life if it is to take on a new shape. ...I do not doubt that a powerful state were to pay a certain percentage of the population to breed and the remainder to be sterilized the ~~new~~ system in time would come to seem perfectly natural and the only one consonant with human nature... A new morality would grow up, doubtless just as rigid as that of the Catholic church, based upon the view that not marriage but ~~marriage~~ procreation is a purely private affair. I am not saying that all this will come about; I am merely suggesting it as a possibility."

* * * *

Tuesday, January 29, 1942

In the January issue of "Jewish Education" Simon Greenberg has an article on "The Religious Emphasis in Jewish Education." In it he takes issue with my general position with regard to religion and especially with what I have to say in my article on "The Teaching of Religion" which appeared in the issue of Sept. 1940. I was of course annoyed by his doing what most of my opponents do, namely, remove my ~~ideas~~ ideas from the context in which I try to set them forth, and belabor them without much rhyme or reason. But I have learned something about Greenberg's philosophy which I did not know before. The same applies to Kadushin to whom G. acknowledges his indebtedness. I ought to bracket Solomon Goldman with them. These people are gradually evolving what may be called an isolationist approach to Judaism. They resent the very idea of trying to equate Jewish religious values with non-Jewish. They want Jewish religion to constitute a universe of discourse so unique as to be incapable of being transposed into the terms of the universe of discourse in which modern minded people are wont to carry on their thinking. "To talk therefore," says Greenberg, "of 'maximum human happiness, salvation, self-fulfillment' is to talk a language utterly strange to our religious tradition."



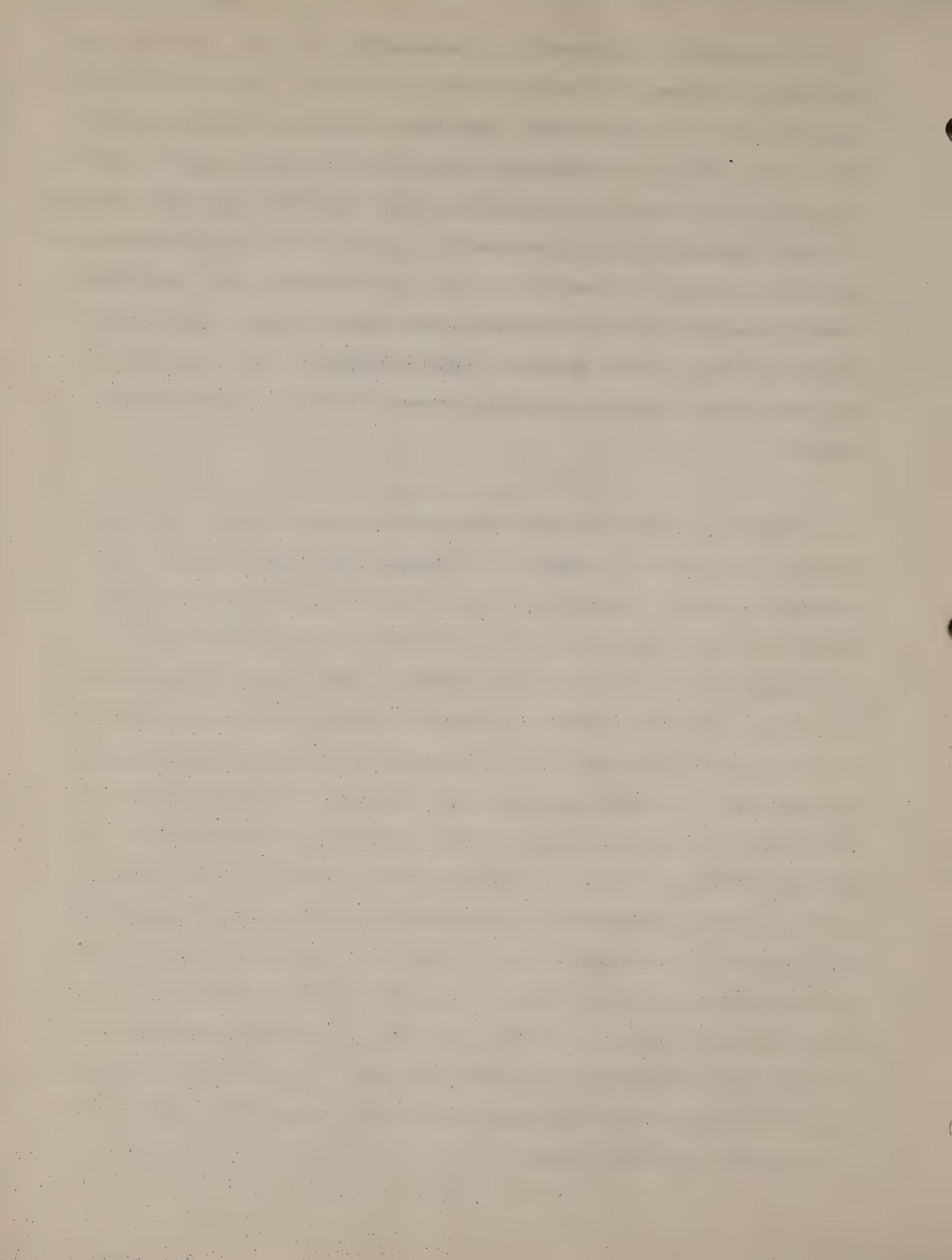
The interesting fact is that those who belong to this group have given up the traditional point of view about miracles and revelation. They deny the historicity of miracles and accept the documentary theory of the Torah. But they want to derive the same satisfaction from tradition as did those who believed in miracles and revelation. They expect to achieve that by emphasizing the idiomatic or unique character of Jewish values. It is an orthodoxy based not upon the belief in the supernatural but upon the romantic appeal of chauvinism.

This afternoon I met with Arzt, Levitsky, Bokser to consider the next step in carrying out the general purpose upon which we had agreed at the meeting held with Finkelstein last Wednesday. Finkelstein joined us after we had decided what to do.

At first Bokser was going off on a wild goose chase with a suggestion about a literary project like that carried out by the Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion, and Levitsky was ready to follow suit. I drew them back to the purpose decided on at the last meeting. Arzt supported me. He referred to the fact that Finkelsteins original plan was to evangelize the different congregations and win souls for Judaism, but added Arzt under a momentary impulse of honesty, "we have nothing to come to the people with." I had him repeat this to Levitsky and Bokser because they were so obsessed with their own ideas that they overheard at first this remark of Arzt's. Having driven the significance of that remark home I had no difficulty in suggesting that we decide on a method of selecting the members of the Rabbinical Assembly who should be invited to constitute the conference commission. It did not take long before we decided to select 30 of the outstanding men whom we can count on as likely to achieve the purpose of the conference commission. These men are Morris Adler, Aronson, Arzt, Bokser, Burnstine, Alex Cohen, Mortimer, Eisenstein, Epstein L., Finkelstein, Fisher Henry, Goldin (?) Goldman, Israel, Goldman Solomon, Gordis, Greenberg Simon, Hadas Gershon, Kadushin, Kaplan, MM., Kohn, Eugene, Landeman, Lang, Levitsky, Levinthal, Newman JJ, Rosenthal, Rubenowitz, Simon, Steinberg, Theo. Friedman.

Ira attended the UPA convention at Cleveland last week end. He brought back with him the following piece of disconcerting information. It seems that in the discussion which are going on among those who are studying the problem of peace terms as they affect us Jews there has arisen a new issue with regard to what Jews should ask for in Palestine. The assimilationists insist that Jews should ask for "A Jewish Commonwealth" and the survivalists want the Jews to ask for the ratification of the Balfour Declaration i.e. for a Jewish national home. The assimilationists dread the thought of a national home because it might jeopardize the status of the Jews outside Palestine. What has happened is that events have made bed fellows of assimilationists and extreme Zionists who negate diaspora Judaism.

Finkelstein is having his hands full with his office workers. They have decided to unionize and to demand of the Seminary both union recognition and a collective contract. The particular union to which they want to belong is an affiliate of the CIO and is said to be dominated by communist influence. F. is torn between the Seminary Board which consists of some of the worst reactionaries and this group of office workers who insist on having their union recognized. He is trying to tell those people that the Seminary as a religious organization cannot treat with a communist dominated union. Moreover as an institution of that kind it is ready to submit all questions of salaries and conditions of work to an arbitration board on which all the parties concerned as well as impartial arbitrators should be represented. The office workers simply refuse to understand why they should be expected to rely on the good will or sense of justice of such a board now that the right of labor to organize is a sacred principle for which they are willing to make the greatest sacrifices. F. talks to them about Jewish ethics and fair treatment of the worker as an integral part of the Jewish religion, and his words fall on deaf ears, even though most of these office workers come from intensely "religious" homes.



This incident is illustrative how totally blind a man of F's type is to the revolutionary change that has taken place in people's lives, and especially in the lives of our Jewish youth. He is completely obtuse to the significance of their regarding the union as representative of a principle for which they are prepared to go to any lengths, whereas they expect nothing from Judaism except a system of taboos dealing with the Sabbath and Kashrut. Had Jews possessed some form of communal organization and had that organization concerned itself with the vital interests of the individual Jew they might have had something analogous to the Catholic provisions for the organization of labor. Jewish affiliation would then have been in a position to come to his assistance in matters that touch him vitally. Judaism would then have had a claim on his loyalty. But as it is it only interferes with other affiliations which do the very thing that Jewish affiliation fails inmost. Is it a wonder Jews see no reason for maintaining a loyalty that does nothing for them?

* * * *

Friday January 23, 1942

Tuesday midnight I left for Norfolk, Va., and got there 11:00 next morning. I was met at the station by Dr. Paul Reich and a friend of his, a Mr. Kushner. Kushner left us after a little while and Reich drove me to the Navy Yard and all the way through it. Being a chaplain in the Navy he was able to do so because no visitors are allowed on the premises. The Navy Yard is a city by itself. There are about 40,000 training and working there all the time. It is from there that soldiers are being dispatched in large numbers to the Pacific.

I drove around with him till 12:30 when we got back to his home where his wife had set out a full dinner for me. She explained that she thought I would not want to eat a hearty meal in the evening before I had to deliver my address. That was very considerate of her. During the entire time that Reich and I drove around before dinner and also after dinner I talked with him about his people and his work. Before noting down some of the things he told me personally I want to quote what he had written me about his community in answer to the request that had had gotten from Janet Weisman that he should give an idea of the general background

of the people I was to talk to. I was scheduled to speak on "Pattern for Modern Jewish Living." The following is what he said in his letter:

"I presume that the Jewish problems of Norfolk are no different than those of other cities. Personally I am very much gratified with the progress of my own congregation (Cong. Beth El) although there remains much to be desired. There is no lack of interest in Jewish affairs in Norfolk. Our people are 'joiners' and practically every national and international Jewish organization is represented. There is however a grievous want of depth in Jewish living and a lack of proper discrimination.

"The perspective of most of our people is awry. The cultural values of Judaism are little known. For the most part they consist of recent books of Jewish authors, or works with Jews as the principal characters. There is no appreciation of Jewish music and art. There is also lacking a binding conception of Jewish life which can coordinate all our activities -- religious, educational, social, Zionist, etc. I have experienced very little resistance to Judaism. The will is present but the lack of background as well as the time consumed by non-important activities is very distressing.

"You asked that I gather five key questions. Among those suggested are:

- a) Is it possible to create some agency to serve as a clearing house for all Jewish activity?
- b) What form of Jewish education would you suggest for our children?
- c) Can our religious services be made more meaningful?
- d) How does Zionism affect the nature of Jewish life here?
- e) What form of Judaism will dominate a generation from now?"

I had misplaced the letter from which I quote the foregoing, and therefore wrote to him to send me a copy of it. Not having a copy he wrote me in which he had the following questions he wanted me to answer:

- a) Why must Judaism be reconstructed?
- b) Must the community be divided among Orthodox, Conservative and Reform elements? Is there any common bond besides philanthropy?

c) What role does Palestine (Zionism) play in this pattern for Jewish living?"

Reich graduated from the Seminary in 1934. Since then he has been with this congregation which at present consists of 300 families. His predecessor was Steinbach, a free lance rabbi who, after attending a number of summer institutes at the Hebrew Union College got his rabbinical degree. He now heads a large Reform congregation in Brooklyn. This Norfolk congregation has known itself for a long time as conservative, the main sign of identification being membership in the United Synagogue. It is an old congregation, if I am not mistaken over ninety years. There is a distinctly Reform congregation in Norfolk which is headed by Mendoza who has as his assistant a recent graduate from HUC, Levinson, a Reconstructionist sympathizer. There is also an orthodox rabbi who has been with the community for about 37 years. His main function and source of livelihood is the kashrut of the meat and the main topic of his sermons the dangers of conservative Judaism. In all the years that those three rabbis have been in Norfolk they have done virtually nothing to further Judaism. Mendozas chief interest is in getting himself invited to preach in the churches. He did not even establish a Sunday School. All he had was some kind of Sabbath afternoon session for the children. Steinbach's hobby was the study of and lecturing on practical psychology. His forte was oratorical pyrotechnics like those of his colleague Mendoza and flattering the women of the congregation.

Reich, on the other hand, is an altogether different kind of a person. As a student at the Teachers Institute and of the Rabbinical School at the Seminary he displayed a high degree of intellectual honesty which he seems to have retained. He takes his work very seriously and by dint of unremitting effort he has succeeded in getting the hearty cooperation of about five or six of his members and the good will of the rest. Two years ago he got his congregation to put up a synagogue center alongside the synagogue building. He has a Sunday School that numbers over 300 children and a weekday Hebrew School that meets 3 to 4 times a week that numbers 64 children. Of these 64 only 20 are girls. Before he could establish the Hebrew School he had to overcome the opposition which was based on the existence of a private cheder headed by an old time teacher. To enable that teacher to

retain the source of his livelihood the community was willing to sacrifice a whole generation of children and their loyalty to Judaism. Such is the perverted sense of values of our people who come from traditional homes.

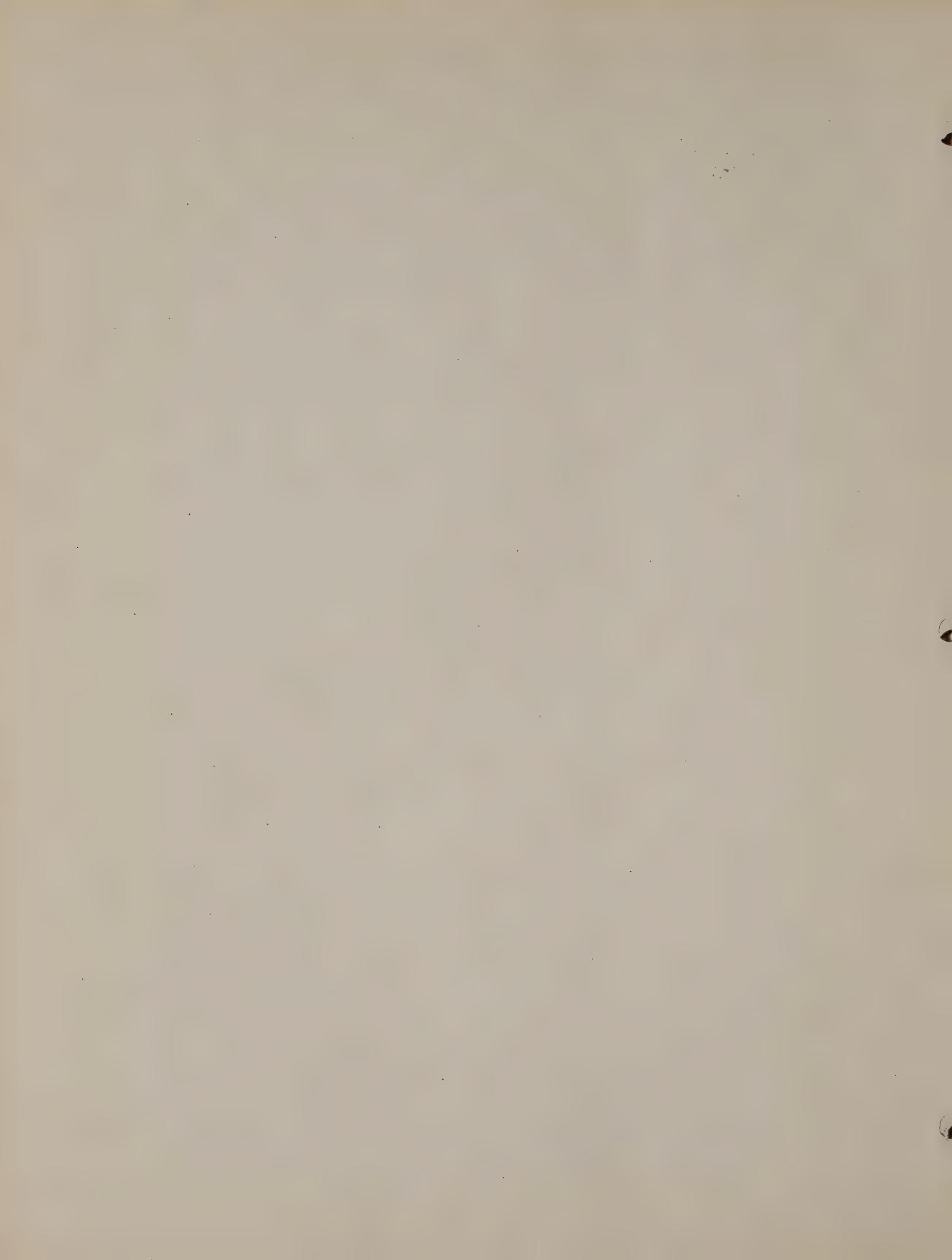
The Jewish community in Norfolk numbers at present 6000 Jewish souls out of a population of 225,000, 52% of which is white and the rest black. There are no manual workers among the Jews. They have small businesses or are white collar workers. The ethical sense is by no means highly developed. Jews who cater to Negro trade take advantage of the Negroes' ignorance of values. The president of Reich's congregation, a Mr. Myer, who wouldn't compliment me enough on my address, was hauled not long ago before a government commission for jacking up the rents in his holdings to a usurious extent. According to Reich this man is so wealthy he could afford to retire and live comfortably on his income the rest of his days.

Reich's salary is \$3750 per annum and he makes another \$750 from perquisites.

Both the Friday night and Saturday morning services draw about 150 worshipers. The congregation consists of would be reform Jews, orthodox and conservative Jews and even radical and communist fellow travelers. I've learned that this heterogeneity is characteristic of most conservative congregations in the smaller communities. The significance of ideological differences is almost nil. Membership is mainly an expression of the desire to feel part of Jewish life. Radical Jews see no contradiction in their attending services on the High Holidays and sending their children to the religious school.

My lecture was the first of a series of three admission to which required buying a one dollar ticket. The other two lecturers are Brickner and Sachar. I had an attendance of 325. I had worked out my talk on different lines from those of previous lectures on that same subject and I was personally much more satisfied with it. I avoided the need of criticizing either Orthodoxy and reform and I gave a concrete illustration of what I meant by the need for a Jewish ethical code, by developing the implications of the Ten Commandments for our day.

The lecture was given under the auspices of the Men's Club which is headed by a Mr. ~~Hackett~~ Harris. I was rather well impressed with the seriousness of that



man. He was not long ago chairman of the Virginia Branch of the B'nai B'rith and had been affiliated with the Reform Congregation for many years. According to what Reich told me Harris rebelled at the vacuousness of the Judaism preached by Mendoza and he joined the conservative Temple Beth El.

Despite Reichs conscientious efforts he has not as yet succeeded in developing in his people the habit of Jewish study. The Men's Club is a device used to smuggle in at least substitutes for study. He claims that study habits are completely foreign to his people and it will take him a long time to break them in. My own personal opinion is that his own preoccupation the last three years with courses in Semitics at Johns Hopkins to which he would have to travel every week prevented him from devoting himself to the task of educating his people in the art of adult study. I suppose getting his Ph.D. will add to his prestige. If at least the subject of his thesis and the courses pursued by him had contributed considerably to his own growth and power to serve his community, the years spent at Johns Hopkins would have been worth while. But when I read his thesis on my way back to New York and recalled that the courses he had taken were in Arabic and Syriac which he is certain to forget within a year or so, since he has no occasion to make use of those languages, I thought to myself that all the energy that went into his getting his degree had been sinfully wasted. If he had devoted even 50% of it toward a deeper understanding of religion and of the human problems associated with it he would have been able to make a far greater contribution to the Jewish and spiritual life of his community. As far as his thesis is concerned it is nothing more than a systematic arrangement of rabbinic dicta about human nature and its reactions to various situations. Such a piece of work can afford but little opportunity for original thinking or research. It is too bad that even a serious person like Reich should have permitted his vanity to get the better of him and to impel him to use up much needed energy on useless studies.

The Seminary students have been discussing excitedly the four articles on the "Guide for Jewish Ritual Practice" and finally decided to hold a symposium on that subject next Wednesday with Finkelstein, Gordis and Steinberg as speakers. The students gave me a copy of the questions which they want to have both Gordis and Steinberg answer.

The following are the questions they want Gordis to answer:

1. Wherein does your rationale for Jewish law differ from that of the Orthodox?
2. Who constitutes Catholic Israel? How does the concept function in Jewish law?
3. Where are we to find the norm for Conservative Judaism?
 - a. In the Seminary faculty? b. In the Rabbinical Assembly? c. In the practices of those who make up the Conservative congregations?
4. What authority does the Shulhan Arukh have in determining religious observance today?
5. Wherein do you depart from the Shulhan Arukh and what are the criteria for such departures?
6. Would you accept the dicta of the Rabbinical Assembly as binding on American Jewry?
7. What do the words divine, revelation, divine revelation and revealed religion mean to you?
8. How does Conservative Judaism propose to deal with the tremendous disparity between belief and practice?
9. What importance do you give self-fulfilment as a criterion of change in Jewish law?

The following are the questions they want Steinberg to answer:

1. How can Reconstructionism hope to prevent (?) a loosening (a reduction) of all observances to the absolute minimum?
2. To what extent is Reconstructionism a "philosophy of convenience?"
3. Can Reconstructionism be properly called the "Left Wing of the Conservative Movement?"

